SILIUS ITALICUS

PUNICA (THE SECOND CARTHAGINIAN WAR)

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BOOK I:1-20 INVOCATION

I begin, and speak of that war by which the glory
of the scions of Aeneas was exalted to the sky,
and proud Carthage bowed to the rule of Italy.
Grant me the power, Muse, to recall the splendour
of our country's deeds in ancient times, and tell
of the many heroes Rome supplied to that fight,
when those scions of Cadmus treacherously broke
the solemn truce, launching a battle for supremacy,
where it was long in question on which of the two
great citadels Fate would set the crown of the world.
Three times those Sidonian leaders in perverse war
broke their pact with our Senate, the treaty they swore
by Jupiter to observe, three times the faithless sword
led them rashly to shatter a peace they had approved.
Yet in this second war, each tried in turn to slaughter,
to exterminate, the other, and those granted victory
came closer to destruction: Scipio Africanus stormed
the citadel of Carthage, Hannibal besieged the Palatine,
and her walls alone ensured the salvation of our Rome.
The causes of such anger, of hatred long maintained,
of enmity passing from generation to generation, I
may reveal, in disclosing the intentions of the gods,
and start by tracing the origin of all these great events.

BOOK I:21-37 JUNO, DIDO AND THE ORIGIN OF THE CARTHAGINIAN WARS

When Dido, long before, fled the realm of Tyre by sea,
a place polluted by her husband's murder, her brother's
guilt, she was destined to be driven to the Libyan shore.
There she purchased land, to found a new city, its cost
allowing her to enclose a coastal strip with bull's hide.
Juno opted to create of these exiles, a nation, to last
forever, dearest of all to her, so high antiquity thought,
above Argos, and above the Mycenae of Agamemnon.
But when she noticed Rome was raising its head among

the mightiest cities, even sending its fleets over the seas carrying its victorious standards through the whole earth, Juno, fearing their closeness, roused in her Phoenicians' minds the frenzy of war. Yet the force of a first campaign being countered, and their fleet being wrecked off Sicily, Juno took up arms again for a fresh conflict; finding one general to meet her need, as she began to stir earth and sea.

BOOK I:38-55 JUNO INSPIRES HANNIBAL TO BATTLE

And Hannibal now clothed himself in all the goddess' anger, she daring to set a lone leader against fate. Then, delighting in that man of blood, and fully aware of the fierce whirlwind of disaster approaching Latium, she spoke: 'In scorn of me, that Trojan exile brought Troy to Latium, with its ancestral gods twice taken captive, and, as victor, secured a kingdom for his Teucrians at Lavinium, yet lasting only till your banks, Ticinus, overflow with Roman dead; till the Trebia, obeying, flows back through the Gallic fields, red with Roman blood, choked with their weapons, and their corpses; till Trasimene shudders at its own pools turbid with gore; and till I witness, from on high, Cannae, Italy's grave, and the Iapygian plain drowned in Roman blood, while Aufidius nearby, uncertain of its narrowing course, can barely force a path to the Adriatic for the shields, and helms, and the severed limbs of warriors.' So saying, she inspired that youthful general to deeds of war.

BOOK I:56-69 THE NATURE OF THE MAN

He was one, by nature, eager for action, yet an oath-breaker, cunning beyond all, though of questionable fairness. Armed, he was no respecter of the gods; bold to do wrong, scorning the virtues of peace; and with a thirst for human blood alive in his deepest marrow. Above all, in the flower of his youth, he longed to erase that defeat off the Aegetes, a generation's shame, and drown their peace treaty deep in the Sicilian sea. Juno inspired him, tormenting his heart with hopes of glory,

Already, in his dreams, he saw himself storming the Capitol,
or forcing a swift passage over the summit ridges of the Alps.
Often the servants sleeping at his doorway were troubled too,
afraid of some piercing cry that shattered the desolate silence,
finding their master drenched in sweat, contriving his battles
yet to occur, engaged in the throes of insubstantial warfare.

BOOK I:70-80 HAMILCAR NURTURES HATRED IN HIS SON

When Hannibal was a child, his father's passion gave birth
in him to this rage against Italy, Latium, the realm of Saturn,
launching his career. His father, Hamilcar, born of the ancient
Tyrian house of Barca, traced his ancestry back to King Belus;
for when Dido, widowed, fled from slavish Tyre, Barca, scion
of Belus, escaping the tyrant Pygmalion's sword, had united
with her, a partner in every cause. Now, Hamilcar, nobly born,
a proven warrior, expert at feeding hatred, sowed seeds of war
in the child's mind, once that child could speak and understand.

BOOK I:81-105 HANNIBAL AT THE TEMPLE OF ELISSA (DIDO)

At the heart of Carthage stood a temple, sacred to the spirit
of Elissa, Dido, that is, its founder, regarded with awe, of old,
by the people, encircled by yew and pine with their dark shade,
enclosing that shrine, and concealing it from the light of heaven.
Here, they said, the Queen had long ago relinquished mortal cares.
Statues in ancient marble stood about, of Belus their pro-genitor,
and all his line; Agenor also, the nation's glory, and Phoenix too,
who gave am enduring name to Phoenicia and the Phoenicians.
Here too the Queen sat, joined at last, eternally, to her Sychaeus;
while at her feet lay Aeneas' deadly gift, that Phrygian sword;
and a hundred altars stood there, sacred to the gods of heaven,
and the lord of Hades below. And there, the priestess in Syrian
robes, with streaming hair, summons up the power of Acheron,
and Proserpine, Enna's goddess. The earth moans and a hideous
hissing erupts from the shade; while unlit fires flare on the altars.
Then the dead, roused by magic spells, fly through empty space,

while Elissa's marble face is damp with moisture. Summoned,
at his father's order, Hannibal was brought there to the shrine;
On entering, Hamilcar examined the boy's manner and bearing.
No pallor blanched his face at the Massylian priestess' frenzied
cries, nor at the dark rites of the temple, its blood-stained doors,
nor the flames mounting higher to the sound of her incantations.
His father stroked the boy's head and kissed him, rousing his
courage by exhortation, filling his mind with these incentives:

BOOK I:106-122 HAMILCAR INSPIRES HIS SON

'My son, the relics of the Trojan race revive and oppress Cadmus'
descendants, us, the children of his stock, with their unjust treaties.
If fate will not allow my sword to cleanse dishonour from our land,
you must choose this for your path to glory; go, then, and take up
a widespread war bringing death to the Romans; may those Tuscan
peoples already rue your birth, and when you, my son, rise up,
may the mothers of Latium prove reluctant to bear more children.'
So he inspired the boy, and imposed a vow, not easy to discharge:
'When I come of age, I will chase the Romans with fire and sword,
and re-enact the fate of Troy. Not the gods, not that pact that bars
the sword, not the high Alps, nor the Tarpeian Rock shall deny me.
This I swear, by the war-god's power, and Elissa, by your shade.'
Then a dark sacrifice was made to the triple goddess, the priestess,
seeking reply, opening the still-breathing body in haste to question
the spirit fleeing from the inner organs that she had swiftly bared.

BOOK I:123-139 THE PROPHETESS TELLS OF THE FUTURE

And when she had entered into the minds of the gods, enquiring
by means of her ancient art, then she cried aloud, bearing witness:
'I see Apulia's Aetolian fields, covered far and wide with Roman
dead, and the waters dyed red with their Trojan blood. How vast
the mass of cliffs that rise to the stars, your camp pitched there,
on the airy ridge! Now, your army plunges down from the hills;
smoke rises from trembling cities, lands beneath Western skies
burn with our Punic fires. See, how the Eridanus runs with blood!

Grim is the face of their leader, dead, on a heap of men and arms, third to kill an opposing general, bear rich spoil to the Thunderer. Ah, what storm rages with pounding rain, the skies torn, the fiery aether flickering! The gods prepare great things: the throne of high heaven thunders, and I behold Jupiter in arms.' Yet Juno, then, prevented her knowing more of what was to come, the entrails ceased to speak to her, events and the long toil again concealed.

BOOK I:139-181 HASDRUBAL IN SPAIN

Hiding his plan for war deep in his thoughts, Hamilcar made for Gibraltar and Cadiz, at the end of the known world; yet, leading Carthaginian standards as far as the Pillars of Hercules, he fell, in furious battle. Meanwhile the cause passed to his son-in-law, Hasdrubal, who in fierce frenzy attacked the wealth of the west, the Spanish people, all those who lived beside the Guadalquivir. Harsh that general's heart, a man of inappeasable anger, the fruit of power for him was cruelty; lusting savagely for blood, madly believing it glorious to be feared. Nor could tame punishments assuage his rage. For Hasdrubal, scorning gods and men, nailed Tagus, of ancient race, high on a wooden cross, a man of great spirit and proven courage, displaying the unburied body of their king, in triumph, to a grieving people. Tagus (his name derived from their gold-bearing river) mourned by the nymphs of Spain, by every cave and shore, might have granted it precedence over Maeonian Pactolus, Lydia's pools, and its plains of streaming gold, turned yellow by the sands of the overflowing Hermus. First to enter the fighting, ever last to lay down his weapons, no sword or swift-flung spear could halt his course, as he rode tall on his charger, with loosened reins, urging the creature on, galloping in triumph, Tagus, his golden armour known to all. Now, his servant, seeing his master's body nailed in hideous death to the fatal tree, secretly stole Tagus' favourite sword, ran to the palace, and struck savage Hasdrubal time and again. Then the Carthaginians, a race delighting in cruelty, inflamed by anger and torn with grief, rushed to bring him to torture. There was no rest from fire, and white-hot irons, at the hands of his torturers, countless blows of the lash, tearing the flesh

to ribbons, iron penetrating to the marrow, flames scorching
the wounds. Dreadful to see and tell, his limbs were stretched,
by the tormenters' arts, far as the rack demanded, but though
his blood poured out, though those shattered limbs steamed
with vapour, his mind remained intact; enduring, despising
his suffering, like a spectator, mocking the men for flagging
at their task, crying out aloud to be crucified with his master.

BOOK I:182-219 HANNIBAL TAKES COMMAND IN LIBYA

While this wretched punishment was meted out to a man who
scorned it, the army of Carthage fearful at the loss of its leader,
with a single voice vied in their eagerness to appoint Hannibal;
their desire incited by the image in him of his father's courage,
by the rumour rife among the people that he was sworn to war,
by his youthful daring, the fervour that became it, by his mind
equipped with cunning, and the power of his native eloquence.
The Libyans were the first to hail him aloud as leader, and then
the Pyrenean tribes and the warlike Spaniards quickly followed.
His heart at once swelled with pride and confidence, at the vast
extent of land and sea he ruled. Libya, on the Tropic of Cancer,
scorched by the southerly Aeolian winds and the heat of the sun,
is part of a vast offshoot of Asia Minor, or earth's third continent.
Bounded, to the fiery east, by the Nile, which enters the swollen
sea through seven mouths; to the north-west, viewing the Great
and Little Bears, viewing Europe over the strait that lies between
the dividing Pillars of Hercules, Libya is blocked by the ocean,
Atlas forbidding his name from extending further, Atlas, who
would bring the sky crashing down if he moved his shoulders.
His cloud-capped head supports the stars, and his lofty neck
holds erect the celestial firmament forever. His beard is white
with frost, pine-woods with their vast shade crown his brow,
winds ravage his hollow temples and foaming rivers stream
from his stormy jaws. Further, the deep sea attacks the cliffs
on either side and, when the sun, that weary Titan, has bathed
his exhausted steeds, hides his fiery chariot in the steamy ocean.
But south, where Africa spreads her thirsty plains, burnt Libya
bears only the plentiful poison of its snakes; though where
a temperate region blesses the fields, the land is unsurpassed

by Sicilian Enna's crops, or those of the Egyptian farmers.
There the Numidians roam widely, without use of the bridle
since the light whips they flick between their horses' ears
direct them in their sport as efficiently as our use of the bit.
That is a land fostering wars and warriors, nor do they trust
to the naked sword alone, dipping the blade in poison also.

BOOK I:220-238 SPAIN ALLIED TO CARTHAGE

His second army of Spain was provided by European troops,
his allies, won to the cause by his father Hamilcar's victories.
There the chargers filled the plain with their neighing, there
the mettlesome horses drew chariots primed for battle; none
sped more furious over the course, not even at Elean Olympia.
Spaniards are prodigal of life, and prepared to hasten death on.
When a man lives on beyond the years of his youthful strength,
impatient with age, he scorns to endure decline, and so he has
recourse to a blade in his own right hand. In Spain every kind
of metal is mined: veins of electrum, of gold and silver mixed,
the yellow tint revealing a mingled origin, and the rough terrain
yields dark iron ore. Though heaven hides these roots of crime,
the covetous Asturians plunge deep down in the bowels of earth,
tunnelling, and sadly emerging as yellow as they gold they dig.
The Duero and Tagus there challenge the gold-bearing Pactolus,
as does the Guadalete, spreading glittering sand over the Gravii's
land, mirroring for them the loss of memory crossing dark Lethe.
Yet Spain is not unfitted for crops, nor inhospitable to the vine,
and there is no country where Minerva's olive-trees rise higher.

BOOK I:239-270 HANNIBAL BEGINS HIS CAMPAIGN

Once these Spaniards had yielded to the Carthaginian general,
and he held the reins of government, then with his father's skill
he won men's friendship; leading them by force, or by bribery,
to reverse the Senate's decrees. He was ever the first to suffer
hardship, first to take to the march, or to bear a hand when
a rampart was quickly raised, nor slow to anything that spurs
a man to glory: denying natural sleep he would spend the night

armed and alert, lying awake on the ground, in his general's
cloak, vying with the toughest veterans of the Libyan army;
or, riding tall leading the winding column, showed his power;
or endured bare-headed the bitter rain and the sky's thunder.
When he rode his startled mount amidst Jove's lightning bolts,
that flared through the downpour, expelled by blasts of wind,
the Carthaginians watched, as the Spaniards shook with fear;
nor was he wearied by the dusty road, nor the fiery dog-days.
When Sirius shone, and the earth was scorched and cracked
by the sun's fierce light, when the air was dried by the blazing
orb at noon, he thought it unmanly to lie on the moist ground
in the shade, but endured thirst, and avoided the springs he saw.
Likewise he would seize the rein and break any horse that tried
to throw him, for battle, loving the glory of some deadly wound,
swimming through the sounding boulders of an uncharted river,
then summoning his comrades across from the opposing shore.
He too was the first to stand on the rampart of a stormed city,
and when he rode over the plain where fierce battle was joined,
wherever he lanced his spear, a red swathe was left on the field.
So, resolved to break the treaty, he pursued the fate laid down,
joyful meanwhile to bring war to Rome, and from the world's
end, from its Western gate, strike hard at the very Capitol itself.

BOOK I:271-295 HE ATTACKS SAGUNTUM (SAGUNTO, 219BC)

His war-trumpets sounded first before the gates of Saguntum,
Hannibal choosing to lay siege there in readiness for greater
battles to come. This city of Hercules tops a gentle slope not
far from the shore, its noble name sacred to Zacynthos, buried
on the lofty hill, who while returning to Thebes with Hercules
after the killing of Geryon, went praising the deed to the skies.
For that monster had three lives, armed with three right hands
on a single body, and bearing a head on each of its three necks.
never did earth see another whom a single death could not end,
for whom the Fatal Sisters would spin a third thread when two
had been severed. There in triumph he was displaying the prize,
calling the captive cattle to water in the noon heat, when a snake
underfoot discharged sun-distilled poison from a swollen throat,

and, fatally wounded, the Greek hero lay dead on Spanish soil.
Later, exiled colonists sailed there, driven by a southerly wind,
people from the isle of Zacynthos, encircled by the Ionian Sea,
once part of Ulysses' kingdom. Then these tenuous beginnings
were buttressed by men from Apulia, lacking a home, sent out
by the famed city of Ardea, ruled by great kings, rich in its sons.
The freedom of Saguntum's people was preserved by the treaty,
and their ancestral glory; Carthage being denied the city's rule.

BOOK I:296-326 THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIEGE

Hannibal broke the treaty with Rome, setting his camp-fires near,
the wide plains trembling at his host. He himself, shaking his head
in fury, rode round the walls on his spirited steed, gauging the fear,
then ordered them to open the gates at once and quit the ramparts:
they were besieged, the treaty forgotten, Italy far away, nor should
they hope for quarter, should they be defeated in the battle to come;
ancestral decrees, law, justice, honour and the heavens themselves,
all were in his power now. A javelin hurled in eager haste confirmed
his words, piercing Caicus' armour, as he stood on the wall uttering
idle threats. Skewered by the missile deep in his entrails, he fell,
his limbs giving way at once, and plunged from the steep ramparts,
delivering back to his conqueror the spear warmed with his blood.
Then, with a shout, a host of men followed their leader's example,
shrouding the walls in a dark cloud of spears. Nor was their bright
courage hidden by their numbers; turning his face to his general,
each man fought as if her were the only one there. One hurled
a rain of bullets from a Balearic sling, swinging the light thong
thrice round his head then, standing erect, launching them high
for the air to take them; another's strong arm, whirling stones;
a third flung a lance with the aid of a leather strap. Their leader,
before them all, conspicuous in his father's armour, with vigour,
hurls a burning brand of smoking pitch, attacks with stake, spear,
stone, or fires arrows doubly deadly, dipped in serpent's venom,
and exults in that deceit. So the Dacians, in hostile Scythian lands,
delight in tipping their darts with venom from their native country,
sending sudden flights over Hister's banks, that is, the Danube.

BOOK I:327-344 HE EXHORTS HIS TROOPS

His next task was to encircle the hill with a line of turrets, surround
the city with a ring of forts. Ah, for Fidelity, once a power among
ancient peoples, now only a name here on earth! Steadfast, its men
stand firm, escape visibly denied them, and the walls encompassed.
For they think Italy worth that sacrifice, if Saguntum falls with its
loyalty yet confirmed. Now they exert all the force they can muster,
with greater ardour; the Phocaean catapult, its ropes stretched tight,
launches huge boulders with a roar, and when the vast engine's load
is changed sends iron-tipped tree-trunks to shatter the standing lines.
A clamour rose on both sides. They joined battle, as fiercely as if
Rome itself was under siege; and above the clamour Hannibal cried:
'We are thousands, a race born to fight, why do we stand here still,
in front of a host already conquered? Are we ashamed of our task?
So much for the delights of valour, and your general's first effort!
Is this a reputation to resound through Italy, this the news we send?

BOOK I:345-375 SAGUNTUM'S WALLS ARE BREACHED

Fired by his words, their spirits rose, his thirst for the fight inspired
their hearts, while thoughts of Italian war to come, spurred them on.
They attacked the defences with bare hands and, thrust down from
the walls, left severed limbs behind. A high mound was piled there,
on which Hannibal placed groups of men, above, to menace the city.
But the besieged were armed with a missile that denied the enemy
the gates, needing many men to poise and direct it, called a falarica:
a wooden shaft, dreadful to behold, a tree-trunk cut from the heights
of the snowy Pyrenees, with a long iron head walls hardly withstood,
a beam wrapped with burning tow, smeared with pitch and sulphur.
Hurled, like a lightning-bolt, from the summit of the citadel's wall,
it cut a furrow of flickering flame through the air, like a fiery meteor
plunging from sky to earth, with blood-stained tail, dazzling the eyes.
This weapon astounded Hannibal, often, with its swift blow, flinging
the smoking limbs of his soldiers high in the air; or striking the flank
of some vast tower in its flight, starting a fire then wholly consuming
the fabric, and burying men and arms together beneath its blazing ruin.
At last his men retreated from the rampart, beneath overlapping shields

in ‘tortoise’ formation, then secretly tunnelled, under a section of wall, until it collapsed in ruins, and opened a breach in the city’s defences. The ramparts built by Hercules fell with a dreadful sound, the huge stones split apart, and a mighty rumbling echoed from the heavens. So the airy cliffs of the high Alps resound, when a mass of rock falls with a not unlike roar, as that avalanche furrows the mountain-side. From the wreckage they strove to raise the rampart again, the fallen wall between, except where here and there men fought in the midst.

BOOK I:376-420 HAND TO HAND COMBAT ENSUES

Murrus darted out, the first of all, noted for his youthful looks; born of Rutulian blood, but a Saguntine mother, the offspring of his two parents combining Italian with Zacynthian ancestry. He now stopped Aradus, who summoned his comrades with a mighty cry as Murrus tracked his forward movement, the point of his spear piercing Aradus between the breastplate and the helm; pinning him with the weapon to the ground, Murrus taunted him too: ‘Lie there, false Carthaginian. You would be first to take the Capitol? Not in your wildest prayers! Now go make war on Dis!’ Then, brandishing his burning spear, he pierced the groin of Hiberus opposite; and treading on Aradus’ face, already convulsed in death, he cried: ‘O fearful host, this is the path you must take to the walls of Rome: so go then, where you hasten!’ Then, as Hiberus renewed the fight, Murrus flourished his weapon, and grasping Hiberus’ shield pierced the man’s unprotected flank. Rich in land and flocks, unknown to fame, Hiberus had been wont to wage war, with javelin and bow, against wild creatures, happy, alas, among trees, and deserving of praise in a life of retirement, if he had never carried his quiver beyond his ancestral forest. Ladmus, in pity for him, arrived to deal a wound, but laughing in derision Murrus cried: ‘Tell Hamilcar’s shade of the strength of my right arm, which, when you dregs are slain, will gift you Hannibal for company!’ Then, rising tall, he struck at the warrior with his sword, piercing Ladmus’ bronze helmet, and rattling all the shattered bones of his skull, under their covering. Next slain by that hand in anger, was Chremes, his shaggy brow rimmed and shaded by curling locks, making a rough cap of his hair; then Masulis and Kartalo, still vigorous in battle in green old age,

not afraid to stoke a lioness, even in cub; and Bagrada, his shield
emblazoned with a symbol of the river which gave him his name;
and Hiempsal, one of those bold Nasmonians who dare to plunder
shipwrecks, and steal from devouring Syrtis; one and all were
killed; with Athyr, clever at leaching deadly venom from snakes,
sending fierce water-serpents to sleep with a touch, and proving
a child true-born, by its lack of fear shown, a horned snake nearby.
You too Hiarbas, neighbour to the sacred grove of the Garamantes,
your helm conspicuous for the ram's-horn curved over your brow;
in vain you reproached the oracle, that often promised safe return,
and, in dying, blamed Jupiter Ammon for his deceitfulness to you.
And already the rampart had grown higher from the pile of corpses,
as the smoke rose from the ruins, drenched by the dark slaughter.
Then Murrus, with eager clamour, challenged Hannibal to combat.

BOOK I:421-455 HANNIBAL RANGES THE BATTLEFIELD

But Hannibal was far away, where, unexpectedly, a band of warriors
had issued from the gates, fighting amongst both armies, ranging
far and wide, as if no sword or spear could deal him death or injury,
brandishing the sword that old Temisus, of the Hesperidean shore,
a powerful wizard, forged not long before with fire and incantation,
in the belief the steel was made stronger by the use of magic spells.
Hannibal seemed as mighty as Mars Gradivus, when the god roams
everywhere in his chariot through the land of the Thracian Bistones,
flourishing his blade that defeated the Giants, ruling over the flames
of battle with the snorting of his horses and the sound of their hooves.
Already Hannibal had sent Hostus to the shades, Pholus the Rutulian,
and huge Metiscus, with Lygdus and Durius and fair-haired Galaesus,
and the twins Chromis and Gyas. Came Daunus, none more skilful
at stirring the gathering with the charm of his eloquence, moulding
men's thoughts with his oratory; none a wiser guardian of the laws;
mingling taunts with his blows: 'What ancestral Fury drives you on,
man of Carthage? This is no Tyrian city built by a woman's power,
bought for a price, no shore with a stretch of sand granted to exiles.
Behold a foundation here laid by the gods, and the allies of Rome.'
Yet even as he shouted out such boasts over the plain, Hannibal
grasped him with a mighty effort and tore him from amongst that

mass of warriors and their spears, then tied his hands behind him,
and reserved him for the punishment of a slow-maturing anger.
Then, reproaching his men, he ordered the banners to advance,
pointing the way, in his wild frenzy, through the heaped corpses,
calling each man by name, offering the proud city as their prize.

BOOK I:456-487 HANNIBAL AND MURRUS MEET IN THE BATTLE

But when fearful messengers told him that elsewhere on the field
the fighting was fierce to their detriment, and that the gods' favour
was handing Murrus glory, Hannibal, abandoning the scene of his
mighty deeds, rushed away like a madman on his frenzied course.
The plume that nodded on his helm flared with deadly brightness,
as a comet with its fiery tale strikes fear in the hearts of fierce kings,
showering blood-red fire: a funereal torch shedding its crimson rays
in the sky, that heavenly body flares with a dreadful glowing light,
threatening earth with destruction. Warriors, weapons, banners, all
gave way before his headlong course, and both armies shuddered;
the fiery point of his spear gave off a deadly light, and his shield
flashed far and wide. So, when the Aegean Sea surges to the stars,
and, to a vast roaring northerly, along the coast, the tide carries
ashore the mounting water, sailors' trembling hearts grow cold;
far off the wind resounds, the swelling storm and arching waves
passing amongst the shuddering Cyclades. Nothing halts his path,
not missiles from the walls, hurled at him alone, not smoking
brands in his face, nor stones hurled skilfully from war-engines.
As soon as he glimpsed Murrus' gleaming helm, and his armour
of blood-stained gold bright in the sunlight, he shouted in rage:
'Is this the man to delay Libya's plans, hinder our great campaign,
shall Murrus impede our war with Rome? Soon, I will teach you
how vain your treaty proves, and its border drawn at the river Ebro.
So much for your untarnished loyalty, your observance of its rules,
leave me to deal with the gods, and their oaths I now disappoint.'
Murrus answered; 'I longed for this meeting: my heart has long
required this battle, alight with the hope of killing you; take your
reward for your oath-breaking, seek Italy in the bowels of the earth!
For my right arm will spare you the long march to the Dardanian
lands, that path to Rome over the snowy Pyrenees and the Alps.'

BOOK I:488-507 MURRUS OFFERS A PRAYER TO HERCULES (ALCIDES)

Meanwhile, seeing his enemy drawing near, trusting to the heights
he stood on, Hannibal tore at the rampart, grasped at a large stone,
and hurled it at the climber's head, with a swift downward action.
Murrus crouched low, struck by that rugged fragment of wall.
Then shame stirred his heart, nor did courage fail, aware though
he was of his harsh situation; gritting his teeth, he struggled
to ascend, clambering roughly over the stones barring his way.
But once Hannibal, clearer in the light, shone before him in all
his grandeur, it seemed the whole Carthaginian host were close
around him, all that dread force attacking, and his eyes dimmed.
A thousand flickering swords at once seemed to dance about him,
while innumerable plumes waved over the helm of his enemy.
Both armies cried aloud, as if all Saguntum glowed with fire,
and Murrus, in fear, dragged his limbs, faint at death's approach,
and uttered a final prayer: 'Hercules, our begetter, whose tract
of sacred ground we dwell on, avert this storm that threatens,
should I but defend these walls of yours with no lack of courage.'

BOOK I:508-534 HANNIBAL COUNTERS, AND THEY FIGHT

While he prayed, raising his eyes to the heavens in supplication,
Hannibal countered: 'Hero of Tiryns, Alcides, consider, and aid
us more justly in our cause. If rivals in courage do not displease
you, invincible Hercules, you will see yourself in former days,
lend your power, and stand beside me as I destroy these scions
of the Trojan race, you who are famed for razing Troy long ago.'
So the Carthaginian spoke, while grasping his sword in anger,
and drove it to the hilt, then withdrawing the weapon, his dread
armour drenched with the blood of the dying man. In a moment,
the defendants rushed forward, shocked by their champion's fall,
denying his proud conqueror their hero's corpse and fine armour:
the force growing by mutual exhortation, they charged en masse.
Stones rattle down on his helm, spears strike his bronze shield,
they attack with stakes and compete to lift and hurl lead weights.
The plume was shorn from his head, the noble horsehair crest
that nodded over the dead was torn to pieces. Now the sweat

streamed from him, and bathed his limbs, and bristling spears
stuck fast in his scaly breastplate. No respite or shift of armour
was granted by this shower of blows. His knees shook; his tired
arms lost hold of his shield. Now, labouring deeply, his breath
steamed, a dense stream of vapour from parched lips; a groan
was heard, from the effort of the lungs, a cry lost in his helmet.
So the deadly wild boar, chased by the baying Spartan hounds,
blocked from the forest by the hunters, the bristling hair on its
back erect, makes its last stand, champs on its foaming blood,
and now, with a groan, dashes its twin tusks against the spears.
Yet courage masters adversity, and Hannibal is glad that valour
shines the brighter in times of trouble, risk is the price of glory.

BOOK I:535-555 HANNIBAL IS WOUNDED, BUT AIDED BY JUNO

Now the sky was cleft, and a sudden crash erupted from dense
cloud, shaking the earth, as Jupiter, with twin lightning-bolts,
thundered above and beyond the battle itself. Then a spear
flew from the clouds, through the blind torrent of the winds,
to punish war's excess, the well-aimed tip lodging in his thigh.
Oh, Tarpeian Rock, you cliffs of Rome where the gods dwell,
and you, fires of Laomedon, you, Trojan altars, eternal flames
the Vestal Virgins tend, what did the heavens not promise you
with that missile hurled in vain! Had it only pierced that fierce
warrior deeper, the Alps would have remained a barrier to men,
and your waters, Allia, still rank direr than those of Trasimene.
But when Juno gazing, from the heights of the lofty Pyrenees,
at his youthful energy and fresh martial ardour, saw the wound
inflicted by the tip of that swift spear, she flew through the air
veiled in a dark cloud, to pluck the sharp weapon from the solid
bone. Hannibal hid the blood drenching his limbs with his shield,
and slowly, unsteadily, little by little, retreated from the rampart.

BOOK I:556-583 SAGUNTUM SENDS FOR AID FROM ROME

At last, with night, welcome darkness shrouded the land and sea,
and parted the warring combatants by robbing them of the light.
But steadfast minds kept watch, and rebuilt the wall, night's task.

The besieged were roused by their extreme peril, their courage, greater at the last, in that desperate situation. So lads, old men, and, here, a woman struggled, energetically, to aid the sad task, in that dark time, while soldiers, wounds streaming blood, bore stones to the breach. Now the senators and elder statesmen took heed of their duty, meeting swiftly, and choosing envoys, urging them to assist in these grievous times and bring help, requesting the support of Roman arms in their extremity. 'Go swiftly, drive your ships with sail and oar, while the wounded beast is penned in camp; we must use this brief respite from battle, and rise to glory out of danger. Go swiftly, bewail the treaty and the ruin of our wall, and bring us better news from our ancient home. This is our last command: return, while Saguntum yet stands.' So the envoys hastened their steps to the shore nearby, then, with swollen sail, they steered a course over the foaming sea. Dawn, old Tithonus' dewy partner, was driving sleep away, while the first breath of her sun-bright horses' neighing stirred the mountain-tops, as they tugged at their rose-coloured reins. Now, high on the rebuilt walls, the besieged reveal their city defended by turrets arisen in the night. All action ceased, as the gloomy enemy paused their siege, their ardour for war in abeyance, turning their thoughts to their leader's danger.

BOOK I:584-608 THE ENVOYS TRAVEL TO ROME

Meanwhile the Saguntine envoys had sailed far over the waves, and the cloud-capped cliffs of Monaco's promontory emerged where Hercules' hills rise above the sea. Thracian Boreas alone lays claim to these rocks, that wild domain, and ever ice-cold, lashes the coast, or strikes the Alps in strident flight. Where he flows over the land from the glacial North, no wind dares rise against him. He churns the sea in mad vortices, while breakers roar, and the cliffs are buried beneath the up-flung waves; then, too, in his course, he raises the Rhine and Rhone to the clouds. Having escaped Boreas' dire fury, they were now communing together, about the succeeding dangers, in war and then at sea, and conversing about the uncertain course of events: 'Oh, Italy, Oh, our country, Oh, glorious home of Fidelity, what does fate

hold for you? Does your sacred citadel still tower over the hills? Or, you gods, alas, do its ashes, alone, recall that mighty name? If the Carthaginians' fires do not lick the heights of our temples, if the Roman fleet still retains the power to aid us, then grant us light airs, and stir the following breeze.' So, night and day, they grieved and wept, until their vessel reached Laurentum's shore, where father Tiber, enriched by the Anio's waters, flows down, a yellow stream, to the sea. From there they soon reached Rome.

BOOK I:609-629 THE SENATE ASSEMBLES

The consul summoned the august assembly, its senators blessed by restraint, by the fame derived from their victories, a Senate equalling the gods in virtue. Brave actions and the sacred desire for justice exalted those men of modest dress and simple food, with hands not slow to exchange the ploughshare for the sword, they were content with little, owning minds immune to riches, often returning to a humble hearth from the triumphal chariot. There at the Senate's threshold, at the doors of the temple, hung the spoils of war, arms taken from enemy generals, savage axes from the battlefield, pierced shields, spears stained with blood, and the bolts from city-gates. Here was witness to the Punic war, and the battle of Sicily, all the ship's prows that testified to how Carthage had been expelled from the waves, her fleet destroyed. Here too were the helmets of the Senones, and Brennus' sword that decreed, in an act of insolence, the weight of ransom paid; and the armour too that was borne by Camillus in his triumph, when those Gauls had finally been sent flying from the Capitol; here also the prizes taken from Pyrrhus, that scion of Achilles, his standards of Epirus; and horned Ligurian helmets; rough shields brought back from the Spanish tribes, Alpine javelins.

BOOK I:630-671 SICORIS SPEAKS FOR THE SAGUNTINES

In the robes of mourning worn by the suppliants, that spoke of disaster and suffering in war, the senators seemed to see before their eyes the very embodiment of Saguntum, seeking

aid in extremity. Then old Sicoris began his melancholy tale:
‘O people, famed for the sacredness of your treaties, whom
nations that bowed to your sword admit, with reason, to be
the seed of Mars, we have crossed the sea for no trivial cause.
We have seen our native city besieged, its walls trembling;
and seen this Hannibal, whom raging seas or wild beasts bore.
Oh, Heaven, I pray, keep that warrior’s deadly arm far from
our ramparts, while confining him to battle with us alone!
With what power they propel the thudding timber! How his
stature grows in conflict! Scorning the boundary of the Ebro,
crossing the ridges of the Pyrenees, he has roused Gibraltar,
stirs the tribes concealed in the Libyan desert, sets his sights
on greater cities than ours. If you fail to prevent this swelling
wave that rises in mid-ocean, it will break against your cities.
Think you that swift Hannibal, sworn to war, will rest content
with Saguntum’s conquest and submission as the only prize
for his campaign that breaches your treaty by force of arms?
Move quickly, with courage, to extinguish the nascent flame,
lest, as the danger grows, there be no time for intervention.
Yet oh, if no danger threatened, if the hidden sparks of war
were not glowing even now, could you scorn to offer help
to Saguntum, your kindred city? All Spain, all Gaul with her
swift horsemen, threaten, all Libya parched by the torrid zone.
I beg you, by the long-cherished origins of the Roman people,
by the household gods of Laurentum, and our relics of Troy,
preserve those faithful who were driven to exchange the walls
of Acrisius’ Ardea, for the towers of our Tirynthian Hercules.
It was your glory to aid Messina, against the Syracusean tyrant,
Hiero, and you considered it a tribute to your Trojan ancestors,
to defend the walls of Capua and drive off the Samnite forces.
Bear witness, you founts and hidden pools of the Numicius,
I too was once a dweller in Italy, and when Ardea sent out her
sons, in whom she was too rich, I it was who carried the sacred
relics, the hidden shrine of the house of my ancestor, Turnus,
and the name of Laurentum beyond the Pyrenees. Why should I
be despised like a limb cut and torn away from the main body?
Why should our blood alone atone for the breaking of the treaty?’

BOOK I:672-694 THE SENATE DECIDES TO SEND OUT ENVOYS

Pitiful to see, when at last they ceased to speak, their unkempt robes torn, they flung themselves down on the ground, palms upraised. Then the senators took counsel and debated the whole issue anxiously. Lentulus, proposed, as if Saguntum's burning roofs were before him, that they demand Hannibal's surrender, and if Carthage refuse, make war at once, ravage her territory. But Quintus Fabius, that cautious reader of the future, no lover of uncertain courses, slow to start wars and skilful at campaigns where no sword was drawn, was the next to speak, suggesting that, in so serious a matter, they should first discover whether Hannibal's madness had begun the war, or if the Carthaginian Senate had commanded the army to advance; they should send envoys to question and report. From the depths of his heart, like a prophet, mindful of the future, and thinking of battles to come, Fabius offered this advice. So will many a veteran ship's captain, spying, from the high stern, the signs that a north-westerly gale might shred the canvas, reef his sails in haste. But tears and grief mingled with resentment, made them all eager to bring fate on; so senators were chosen to approach Hannibal and, should he turn a blind eye to the treaty and fight on, then set a course for Carthage, and declare war outright on men oblivious to the gods.

End of Book I of the Punica

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BOOK II:1-24 HANNIBAL REJECTS THE ROMAN MISSION

Now the Roman vessel carried the leading senators out over
the blue waters, with those strict orders of the mighty Senate.
Quintus Fabius made one, a scion of Hercules who recalled
three hundred ancestors swept away in a day by the tempest
of war, when Fortune frowned on the patrician cause, staining
the banks of the Cremera with their blood. Accompanying him,
was Publicola, a descendant of mighty Volesus, of the Sabines
out of Sparta, sharing the responsibility with his colleague.
Publicola's name attested a friendship for the common people,
his ancestor first on the roll of consuls of the Roman Republic.
But when Hannibal heard that the envoys, with lowered sails,
were entering harbour, bringing the Senate decree, demanding
peace though late, to a raging war, demanding his punishment
according to treaty, he swiftly ordered armed men to position
themselves along the shoreline, with their banners threatening,
shields fresh-dyed with blood, and weapons red from slaughter.
'This is no time for words,' he cried, 'the whole land resounds
to the blare of the Tyrrhene trumpet, and the groans of the dying.
Let them sail back while they can, not rush to join the besieged;
beware what anger, and weapons hot from killing allow, what
the sword dares in action.' Thus scorned by Hannibal, the envoys,
driven off along the hostile coast, turned and made for Carthage.

BOOK II:25-55 HANNIBAL ADDRESSES AND INSPIRES HIS TROOPS

Hannibal shook his fist at the ship as its sails were spread, crying:
'By the gods, it is my head, mine, that vessel seeks to carry over
the sea! Alas, for blind hearts, and minds swollen with conquest!
An impious land demands a Hannibal, in arms, for punishment.
Without their asking, I will come; they'll see more than enough
of me before long, and Rome which now defends foreign cities
will tremble for her own gates and her own hearths. Though they
retreat once more to the lofty cliffs that defend the Tarpeian Rock,
captives, they shall not ransom their lives a second time for gold.'
These words inspired his men, and they fought with greater fury.

At once the sky was darkened by clouds of missiles, the towers
of Saguntum rang beneath a dense hail of stones. Their ardour
drove them to wage war within sight of the receding vessel,
while the walls were still visible from its deck. But Hannibal,
conspicuous, his wound exposed to view, demanded himself
as scapegoat for his troops, in furious complaint, repeatedly:
'Oh, comrades, they demand my person; and Fabius at the stern
displays my chains, the anger of an imperious Senate seeks me.
If you weary of our task, if the war we wage is culpable, hasten
to recall that Ausonian vessel from the waves. I will not resist,
hand me to torture with my hands in fetters. For why should I,
who trace my lineage to Tyrian Belus, I, the master of all these
peoples of Libya and Spain, why should I not be made a slave?
Why not let the Romans rule forever, and spread their tyranny
proudly over all the world for all the generations yet to come?
Why should we not tremble at their word and obey their bidding?'
But his warriors groaned aloud at this, and deflecting the evil eye
onto all that Trojan race, with their clamour, increased their wrath.

BOOK II:56-88 ASBYTE THE DAUGHTER OF HIARBAS ENTERS THE FRAY

Daring Asbyte, daughter of Hiarbas the Garamantian, had come
with the troops from Marmarica to fight against Rome, among
the loose-robed Libyans, and the tribes speaking Egyptian too.
Hiarbas was the son of Ammon, and his extensive power ruled
the caves of Medusa, Phorcys' daughter, and the Macae living
beside the Cinyps, and the Cyrenians the cruel sun scorches.
The Nasamones, hereditary subjects, and ever-thirsty Barce,
and the groves of the Autololes, and the shores of treacherous
Syrtes, and nimble Gaetulians, riding free of reins, obeyed him.
He had built a marriage-bed for the nymph Tritonis, who bore
this princess, who claimed Jupiter as her ancestor and derived
her name from Jupiter Ammon's oracular grove. She, a virgin,
forever slept alone, and spent her early years in the forest chase;
nor had the wool-basket softened her hands, nor had she plied
the spindle, but she loved the woods, and Diana the Huntress,
and urged on the swift horse with her heels, killing wild beasts
without mercy, even as the Amazon bands in Thrace traverse

Rhodope, and the lofty forests on Pangaeus' stony ridge, tiring the Hebrus with their speed, unmarried, scorning the Cicones, the Getae, the royal house of Rhesus, and the Bistones with their crescent-shaped shields. Conspicuous in her native dress, her long hair bound with a golden gift from the Hesperides, her right breast bared for battle, and the glittering cover of her Thermodontion shield shining on her left arm protecting her in battle, she urged on her smoking chariot to furious speed. Some of her company drove a team of two, while others rode on horseback; some of the princess's companions had already submitted to the bond of marriage, but more were still virgin. She herself displayed, before the ranks, mounts she had chosen from the herds among distant huts; and close to the mound she made circuits of the plain, while hurling her quivering javelins through the air, planting them on the citadel's summit.

BOOK II:89-147 THE DEATH OF MOPSUS AND HIS SONS

Time and again, she hurled her missiles beyond the battlements, but old Mopsus could not bear it, and his twanging bow sent Gortynian arrows flying from the high walls, inflicting deadly wounds with their winged steel from the clear sky. He himself was Cretan, journeying there from the caverns of the Curetes, that ring with clashing bronze. When a nimble lad he would attack the woodland glades of Dicte with his feathered shafts. He would often bring down passing birds from the sky above; he would wound from a distance and halt some stag, escaping from nets strung across the ground; and while his bow still sounded, the creature collapsed, startled by the sudden blow. Gortyn had then more reason to boast of Mopsus than many another bowman, even though her archers rival the Parthians. But, lacking wealth, and unwilling to waste his life in the hunt, he was driven abroad by his poverty, led by fate to Saguntum, arriving a humble guest, with his wife Meroë, and his two sons. Now Mopsus, between his boys, rained darts from his Cydonian bow of horn on the Massylian warriors, while over the youths' shoulders hung quivers of steel-tipped arrows, Minos' weapons. He had already killed Garamus and bold Thyrus; Gisgo, as he

attacked; fierce Bagas; and beardless Lixus not worth such skill.
So Mopsus waged war with a full quiver. Then he set his gaze
and turned his weapon on Asbyte, though his prayers to Jove
found no favour, having abandoned Crete, deserting the god.
For when Harpe, a Nasamonian girl, saw the deadly bow move,
she placed herself in the way of the distant danger, anticipating
death as she cried out, the flying arrow entering her open mouth
so that her virgin sisters saw the tip standing out from her neck.
Asbyte, grinding her teeth in wrath at the fall of her companion,
raised the girl's limbs and drowned in tears the swimming eyes
with their failing light, then with all the power of her sorrow she
summoned her strength and hurled her javelin towards the wall.
With a sudden blow, it pierced, in flight, the shoulder of Dorylas,
Mopsus' son, who tried to launch, from his taut bow, the arrow
which was poised in its tightened arc, but his grip had loosened
and, struck so suddenly, he fell headlong from the battlement,
darts from his upturned quiver cascading over his falling limbs.
His brother, Icarus, armed alike and standing near, cried aloud,
and prepared to avenge his lamentable death. But as he raised
his weapon in his eagerness to reply, Hannibal anticipated his
action, and struck at him hard, with a whirling mass of stone,
such that his limbs, numbed by an icy chill, refused to bear him,
his nerveless fingers returned to his quiver the arrow it lacked.
Then Mopsus, at the death of his two sons, caught up his bow
in grief and rage, and tried to bend it thrice, but thrice his arm
fell, and sorrow robbed him of his usual skill. Too late, alas,
he regretted leaving his own fair land, and eagerly clutched
the stone that struck Icarus. But, the old man, realising that
the feeble blows he dealt his own breast were in vain, that
his arm could not even terminate his deep sadness in death,
threw himself headlong from the heights of the vast tower,
and falling prone his dying limbs lay across his son's body.

BOOK II:148-187 EURYDAMAS IS KILLED BY ASBYTE

While this Cretan guest lay dying in a foreign war, Theron,
the custodian of Hercules' temple and the priest at his altar,
urged on the defenders, and tried a fresh action, unbarring

the gates, and making a sudden attack on the Carthaginians,
in fierce fight. He carried no spear, and he wore no helmet,
but trusting in his broad shoulders, and youthful strength,
he smote the enemy with his club, without need for a sword.
A lion-skin covered his back, with the fearful head and its
open jaws topping his tall figure, and on his shield appeared
a hundred snakes twined about the Lernean monster, Hydra,
whose serpent-heads multiplied whenever any were severed.
He had driven Juba, and his father Thapsus, from the walls,
and Micipsa of illustrious ancestry, with Saces the Moor,
and chased them headlong to the shore as they fled wildly;
and his right hand alone made the waters foam with blood.
Not content with slaying Idus, and Cotho of Marmorica,
Rothus and Jugurtha, he set his sights on Asbyte's chariot,
the radiant cloak about her, and her brightly jewelled shield,
and he focussed his whole intent on that warrior maiden.
When the princess saw him approach with his blood-stained
weapon, she veered her horses aside, and wheeling to her left
escaping, flew over the plain like a bird, bisecting the field,
showing him her chariot's back. As she vanished from sight,
her thundering wheels crushed the enemy ranks far and wide,
while her team, galloping like the wind, raised a cloud of dust
over the field, as she launched spear after spear in the chaos.
Here fell Lycas, Thamyris, and Eurydamas of famous name,
a descendant of noble stock; whose ancestor, alas, long ago
had dared to hope for a splendid marriage with Penelope,
Ulysses' wife, but was deceived by the arts of that chaste
woman, who unravelled the threads of her web each night.
He claimed Ulysses had drowned at sea, but the Ithacan
punished that speech with actual death, no lie, granting
the man a funeral, no marriage. Now his latest scion,
Eurydamas, was slain on the Iberian field, at the hands
of a Numidian princess; and the dark chariot resounded,
as it clattered over his shattered bones, on its swift course.

BOOK II:188-232 ASBYTE IS KILLED IN TURN BY THERON

And now Asbyte returned to the fray, seeing Theron
standing apart, aiming her savage battle-axe straight
at the centre of his brow, she vowed the proud spoil,
Hercules' lion-pelt, to you, Diana. Nor did Theron
hang back, rising up, in hopes of glory, in the face
of her very horses, thrusting the tawny lion's mask
at them as they veered in fright. Frantic with fresh
terror at those menacing jaws, the team overturned
the heavy chariot. Then Theron leapt to stop Asbyte
as she tried to evade a fight, and struck her between
the temples with his club, spattering the smoking
wheels and the reins, flailing from the horses' fear,
with brain-matter erupting from her shattered skull.
Then seizing her axe, eager to advertise her death,
cut off the girl's head as she rolled from the chariot:
and his rage unsated, fixed it high on a pike for all
to see, ordered it borne before the Carthaginian line,
the chariot to be driven swiftly toward the city walls.
Theron, blind to his fate, deserted by divine favour,
fought on, though death loomed close. For Hannibal
arrived, anger and menace in every feature, maddened
and pained at heart by Asbyte's death, and the vile
trophy of her head borne aloft. As his gleaming shield
of bronze shone out, and the armour on his swift limbs
clanged afar like the knell of doom, the defenders were
suddenly struck with terror, and fled towards the walls.
Blind anxiety drove on the frightened men, headlong,
as evening drives the birds, on rapid wings in the fading
light, from their feeding-grounds to their roosting-place;
or as the bees, heavy with nectar, hasten back to their
hives of dripping combs and fragrant wax, when rain
threatens the swarm, that's scattered among the flowers
on Athenian Hymettus, and flying, in a dense cloud,
they mass, with loud humming noise, at the threshold.
Oh sweet light of heaven, why do men so fear the death
which is to come, the destiny imparted to them at birth?

Now damning their actions, they regret their emergence
from the gates and the walls' protection; Theron can
scarce restrain them, with loud threats and now force:
'Hold, men; the enemy is mine; mine the greater glory
this battle brings, now hold! My right arm shall drive
these Carthaginians from Saguntum's roofs and walls:
simply stand as spectators, men; or if sharp fear drives
you city-wards, sad sight, shut the gates on me alone!

BOOK II:233-269 HANNIBAL KILLS THERON IN RETRIBUTION

But Hannibal speeding, in his headlong course, towards
the walls, as the defenders shook with fear for their safety
and despaired of life, chose to assault the city through its
open gates, delaying the battle and slaughter of his foes.
When that brave guardian of Hercules' temple, Theron,
saw this, he ran forward, urged by fear, to forestall him,
But the Carthaginian's anger grew fiercer: 'You shall
meet ruin at my hands, nevertheless, good gatekeeper,
and in death throw open the city.' Anger permitted no
more speech, as he whirled his gleaming sword about,
but the Saguntine warrior swinging his club first, with
a mighty effort, hurled it at the man; and his armour
rang harshly at that weighty blow, while the heavy
knotted club, striking the hollow bronze, rebounded.
Then, weapon-less, betrayed by an inconclusive stroke,
Theron roused his limbs to swift flight, and ran around
the walls trying to escape by speed. The fierce victor
pursued, hurling insults at the fugitive's back, while
from the walls the women cried out, and their voices,
mingled with lament, rose from the high battlements.
Now they called Theron's name, and now, too late,
wished they could open the gates for that weary man;
yet as they exhort him their hearts tremble with terror,
lest that might let the mighty enemy within the walls.
Hannibal struck the tired runner with his shield, then
leapt on him as he fell, showed him to the watchers
on the walls, then buried his fatal sword in the throat

of one who had opted to lose his life, while shouting:
'Go, comfort poor Asbyte with this swift retribution!'
Then he drove away joyfully with her captured horses,
seizing them from before the walls, where the mass
of fugitives had used chariot and team as a defence
to block the entrance to the gates, then sped away
in the chariot to ovations from the Carthaginian lines.
Then the Numidian warriors, crazed with grief, hurried
Asbyte's sad interment, granting the honour of a pyre,
seizing Theron's body and, bearing it around her ashes
thrice and hurling his murderous club and his fearful
lion's mask into the flames, left the corpse, its face
scorched, eyes disfigured, to the carrion-birds of Spain.

BOOK II:270-326 HANNO CONDEMNS THE WAR

Meanwhile, those who ruled Carthage took counsel
regarding the war and the answer that should be sent
to the Roman people, the envoys' threatening attitude
filling them with trepidation. They were influenced
on the one hand by loyalty to those oaths the gods
had witnessed, and to which their fathers had sworn;
on the other by the popular love for their ambitious
young leader, from whom they hoped for the victory.
But Hanno, Hamilcar's foe of old, led the opposition,
criticising their eagerness and incautious favouritism:
'All things, senators, make me afraid to speak (since
angry and unrestrained threats have indeed been made)
yet I shall not concede, though violence be contemplated.
I will summon the gods to witness, giving notice above
of what the state's safety, our country's peril, demands.
Not only now, with Saguntum besieged and in flames,
have I prophesied evil; I have laid bare my anxieties,
I have warned you, and will warn you still while I live,
not to permit him to be exalted in arms, in war; I marked
his poisonous nature, possessing his father's arrogance;
as he who forecasts the weather, watching the starry sky,
predicts to wretched sailors the imminent fury of the sea,

and not idly, when the North-westerly gale approaches.
He has placed himself on a throne, and seized the reins,
thus the treaty is broken by force, by force all obligation,
cities are shattered and distant Roman minds are stirred
against Carthage, peace is over. This youth is maddened
by his father's angry shade, by that deadly oath he swore,
by the gods who oppose an unfaithful breaker of treaties,
and by the Massylian prophetess. Now, blinded and dazed
by new-found power, he shakes foreign cities to the core,
or are they foreign? Is it Saguntum's roofs he surrounds,
(and so himself is accountable for the crime, without
involving his country in punishment) or is it the walls
of Carthage, I say, that now, even now, he attacks, laying
siege to you and yours with his army? We soaked the vale
of Enna in the blood of the brave, and could scarcely fight
the war without Spartan mercenaries. We filled Scylla's
cave with wrecked ships, watched our fleet carried off
by the tide, with Charybdis whirling the benches round
and spewing them back from the depths. See, madman,
without fear of the gods in your heart, how the Aegatian
Islands and Libya, our limbs float far away! What then
are you aiming for? Is it fame for yourself at the expense
of your country's ruin you seek? Perhaps the vast Alps
will sink flat at the sight of a youth in arms, the snowy
mass of the Apennines, too, will sink, whose summits
look up to the Alps? And suppose you reach, the plains,
vain fool. Their people own to a spirit that never dies,
that flame and sword cannot tire! You'll not be fighting
there against colonists from Zacynthos. Their soldiers
grow to manhood in camp, their faces know the helm
before the golden down, nor do they relent in old age,
even those who shed blood over long years of service
hold to the standard, form a front, and challenge death.
I myself have seen Romans, pierced through the body,
draw the blade from their wound and hurl it at the foe.
I have witnessed their courage, how they die, and their
passion for glory. What bloodshed does Hanno not save
Carthage, if she resists war, chooses not to oppose them!'

BOOK II:327-377 GESTAR REPLIES ADVOCATING CONFLICT

Gestar (who, harsh and impatient, had long been nursing
bitter anger, and had twice disturbed Hanno mid-speech,
trying to silence him) now replied: 'You gods, does
a Roman sit in Libya's council, the Carthaginian Senate?
He is not yet in arms, but in all else an enemy revealed!
Now he berates us with both the Alps and the Apennines,
now with Sicilian seas and the waves off Scylla's shore,
he seems afraid of the very shades and ghosts of Italy;
he praises their deaths and wounds to the sky, and exalts
that nation. But they are mortal, believe me, though his
terrified heart trembles with vile fear. I was there, when
Regulus, the hope and pride of that Trojan race, amidst
the shouts of our people was dragged, both hands bound
behind him, to his dark dungeon; I was there when he
hung high on the tree, saw far Italy, from his tall cross.
In truth I feel no fear of the brows that wear a helmet
in boyhood, those heads that bear steel before their time.
We here, are not so slow to fight. Behold, our Libyan
cavalry, who vie in efforts beyond their years, who
ride their horses bareback! Behold, our general, Hannibal,
who pledged himself to war, the clarion call, and to bring
fiery death to that Trojan people, and fought his father's
battle in spirit. Let the Alps touch the sky, the Apennines
raise their gleaming peaks to the stars, he will find a way
over rock and snow (I speak so that even this idle boast
may sting the traitor's heart), across high heaven itself.
It is shameful to shun the path Hercules' trod, to shrink
from reiterating that glory. Hanno exaggerates Libya's
defeats and that first war's devastation, and forbids us
from labouring in defence of freedom once more. Let him
lay aside anxiety and fear, and restrain his defeatist sighs,
he sounds like a helpless woman behind her house walls.
We, we shall march against the foe, determined to drive
our conquerors far from this citadel of Byrsa, even if Jove
is not on our side. Even if destiny is against us and Mars
has already quit ill-fated Carthage, I would rather die,
than deliver you, my glorious country, to eternal slavery,

rather, a free man, see the Acheron. For what does Fabius
demand, you gods! ‘Lay down your weapons, instantly,
and leave the captive city of Saguntum. Let your choice
troops set light to their piled-up shields, burn your ships,
abandon the sea completely.’ You gods, if Carthage is far
from meriting such punishment, prevent this wrong, leave
our general’s hands free to act.’ Then he took his seat again,
and the senate was granted the power to vote, as customary,
though Hanno demanded the spoils of war be relinquished,
and that Hannibal, the breaker of the treaty, be apprehended.

BOOK II:378-390 QUINTUS FABIUS DECLARES WAR ON CARTHAGE

Then, indeed, the senators, as excited as if the foe had burst
into the temple, leapt up and invoked the gods to visit evil
omens upon Latium. And when Fabius viewed the discord
in their hearts, and saw their faithless minds inclined to war,
he could no longer hide his resentment patiently, demanding
a swift decision, and once they gave him their attention, he
gestured to them that he carried war or peace in his hands,
demanding they choose, not cheat him with an ambiguous
answer, and when the senators refused to accept either, he
replied, shaking his robes as if pouring out battle and ruin
from his arms: ‘Take war, unhappy Libya, with an outcome
like the first.’ Then sailed home, bringing news of conflict.

BOOK II:391-456 THE SHIELD GIFTED TO HANNIBAL

While this took place in the realm of Dido the exile, Hannibal
swiftly attacked those tribes whose loyalty was waning with
the war’s uncertain basis, then loaded with spoils summoned
his army back to Saguntum’s walls. Behold, the people who
live by the Atlantic shore, brought the general gifts, a shield
glittering with savage light, the work of Galician craftsmen;
a helm adorned with flickering plumes, on whose white crest
snowy feathers nodded, and waved; a sword, and a spear alone
destined to slaughter thousands, and a breastplate, with triple

gold bosses, a protection no weapon could pierce; fashioned, this armour, of bronze and steel, rich with gold from Tagus; with triumph in his eye, he delighted in examining each part, pleased at the scenes depicted there of the origins of Carthage. There, Dido was seen, founding the new city, with the men of her fleet engaged on the work, sinking piers for a harbour, others assigned sites for houses by venerable and righteous old Bitias. They pointed to the skull of a war-horse dug from the soil, hailing the omen with a shout. And, amidst all this, Aeneas was visible, parted from his fleet and his followers, cast up on shore by the waves, his right hand in supplication. The unfortunate queen gazed at him avidly, with calm brow and already amorous looks. Then Galician art had fashioned the cavern, the lovers' secret meeting-place; while to the cries of mounted men and baying hounds, alarmed by sudden rain, all the huntsmen were seen taking shelter, deep in the forest. Near this scene, Aeneas' ships were quitting shore, making for open water, while Dido called to them, in vain, to return. Then she, Elissa, wounded, stood all alone on a vast pyre, tasking the future Carthaginians with avenging her in war; while Aeneas, out at sea, saw the blaze, yet set sail to meet his high destiny. Elsewhere on the shield, Hannibal prayed to the gods of the underworld and, the Stygian priestess beside him, made dark libation of blood, and swore to wage war against those scions of Aeneas from his youth onwards. Old Hamilcar was there too, exulting over the Sicilian fields, such that you'd think him alive and stirring breathless battle, ardour alight in his eyes, and his image grim and threatening. The left side of the shield revealed the Spartan cohorts also, in sharp relief, led in triumph by the victorious Xanthippus, who hailed from Amyclae, Leda's city. And the nearby scene showed Regulus, hanging nobly, beneath the depiction of his sad torments, setting a true example of loyalty to Saguntum. But about was a happier scene, herds of creatures in the hunt, and engraved huts gleaming. Not far distant, a wild sunburnt sister of the dark-skinned Moors was soothing her companion lionesses in native speech. A shepherd roamed over the plain, and his flock made their way freely over the limitless pastures; while, in the native manner, a Carthaginian herdsman carried

everything with him, javelins, baying Cretan hound, and tent,
flints to make fire, and the reed-pipe, that his cattle knew well.
Saguntum rose there, eminent on its lofty hill, and a dense host
swarmed about, ranks of men attacking with quivering spears.
The Ebro flowed round the outer rim of the shield, enclosing
the broad surface with its winding curves, and Hannibal also
was shown, breaking the treaty by crossing the river, calling
on every one of the Carthaginian nations to war against Rome.
Now, proud of these new gifts, he fitted the clanging armour
to his broad shoulders, and with head held high, proclaimed:
'Alas, what torrents of Roman blood must drench these arms!
How vast the penalty, their Senate, the arbiter of war, will pay!'

BOOK II:457-474 THE SIEGE GAINS ITS GRIP ON SAGUNTUM

By now the Saguntines had been weakened by the siege, time
had sapped the city's strength, as they wearily awaited allied
help and the eagles. Then turning their eyes from the empty
sea, finding the shore as hopeless, they saw doom was nigh.
Profound destruction, rooting in their very bones, had settled
on them, while it consumed the starving people from within.
Hunger's slow, secret poison, long endured, wasted the flesh,
and scorched their bloodless veins; the eyes receded in their
emaciated sockets; their bones extruded, scarcely covered by
the trembling sinews and pallid skin, and the withered limbs
were dreadful to see. They barely eased their thirst with moist
dew from the damp earth at night, and with fruitless labour,
tried to squeeze the sap from dry branches. Nothing was alien,
rabid hunger forced them to eat strange things, stripping their
leather shields bare, and gnawing the straps on their armour.

BOOK II:475-492 HERCULES PLEADS WITH THE GODDESS FIDELITY

Hercules looked down from on high, saw all this, and wept
for the situation of the stricken city. However, the power
of his mighty father made him fear opposing the decrees
of Juno his cruel stepmother. Thus hiding his intent, he

made his way to the threshold of sacred Fidelity, seeking
her hidden purpose. The goddess, who delights in solitude,
chanced to be in a remote region of the heavens, musing
on the high concerns of the gods. Then he who brought
calm to Nemea with the slaying of the lion, spoke to her
reverently: ‘Goddess, older than Jove, you glory of gods
and men, without whom peace is absent on land or sea,
sister of Justice, silent power in the heart, can you see,
unmoved, the dire fate of your own Saguntum, look on
a city that suffers such harsh punishment for your sake?
The people are dying for you, and the women, subdued
by famine, the men in sorrow, call on you alone, with a
single voice, your name sounds first among the children.
Bring aid from heaven, grant that the weary may live.’

BOOK II: 493-512 FIDELITY PROMISES TO AID SAGUNTUM

So spoke Hercules, Alcmena’s son; the goddess replied:
‘Indeed, I do see, nor do I set broken treaties at naught;
the day is fixed that will take vengeance on such evil.
But, hastening to quit the polluted earth, I was forced
to change my dwelling place and settle here, so fertile
the human species in its sins. I fled the impious kings,
who fear as they are feared; the frenzy for gold, the vile
reward for wickedness; and above all from races horrific
in their rites, living by violence like wild creatures, all
honour dissolved in licence, shame lost in darkest night.
Force they worship, the sword stands for justice, virtue
yields to crime. Behold the nations, none are innocent!
Partnership in crime alone preserves the peace. Yet, if
you wish the walls you built to offer a stout resistance,
and though damaged, not yet yield to the Carthaginians,
I will grant the only thing fate and future events allow,
I will ensure the glory of their death is transmitted to
posterity, and escort their noble spirits to the shades.’

BOOK II: 513-525 FIDELITY INSTILS COURAGE

Then the austere virgin goddess sped through the gentle
aether, angered to find Saguntum wrestling with its fate.
Entering the defenders' minds, pervading their hearts
as ever, she filled their spirits with her divine power.
Then, piercing them to the very marrow, she possessed
them, inspired them with a burning passion for herself.
They take up arms, and make painful efforts to fight.
Unexpected strength is there, and they resolve to honour
the goddess dear to them, to sacrifice themselves for her.
An unspoken purpose fills the sufferers' exultant hearts,
to endure worse than death, and imitate the wild beasts
in their appetites, making of sustenance inhuman crime.
But chaste Fidelity prohibits extending life by sinfulness,
the appeasing of hunger by recourse to each other's flesh.

BOOK II: 526-542 JUNO SUMMONS THE AID OF TISIPHONE

Juno, Saturn's daughter, by chance, was herself heading
for the Carthaginian camp, and seeing the virgin goddess
in the citadel of a race she hated, she rebuked her passion
for war and, distraught with anger, she swiftly summoned
dark Tisiphone, who, with her lash, torments the spirits
in the depths, and stretching her hands out cried: 'Daughter
of Night, overthrow these walls by force, bring this proud
people low at their own hands; Juno it is commands, and I
will be near, to observe, from the clouds, your application
and your zeal. Yours be the weapons that trouble the gods,
even Jupiter supreme, and stir the Acheron, your torches
and hideous serpents, and that hissing, yours alone, which
makes Cerberus close his triple jaws in fear, that frothing
venom mixed with gall: whatever crimes or punishments,
whatever of wrath you nurture at your fecund breast, hurl
headlong at the Saguntines, despatch all that city to Erebus.
Let that be the price of Fidelity's descent from the heavens.'

BOOK II: 543-579 TISIPHONE PRETENDS TO BE MURRUS' WIFE TIBURNA

So saying, the goddess, roused, spurred on the savage Fury,
urging her on by force against the walls; suddenly the hills
trembled all around, the waves along the shore roared more
deeply. Knots of scaly-backed serpents gleamed and hissed
about the Fury's head, and coiled about her swollen neck.
Death stalked, opening wide his hollow jaws, throat gaping
to consume a doomed people: around him stood Mourning,
Lament with blackened breast, and Grief and Pain, and all
the Retributions were there, and Cerberus, sleepless guard
of the tearful realm, bayed from his triple throat. At once,
the Fury changed her shape, took on the likeness of Tiburna,
Murrus' widow, aping her manner of walking and her voice.
Tiburna, robbed of her husband, grieved at the marriage-bed
rendered empty by battle, and the savage whirlwind of war.
She was of noble birth and derived her name from the blood
of Daunus. The Fury assumed her form and, hair dishevelled,
cheeks lacerated in token of mourning, rushed wildly among
the crowd, crying: 'Where will this end? Have we not given
enough for Fidelity's sake, and our ancestors! Oh I, myself,
in terrifying dreams, have seen my beloved Murrus drenched
in blood, I have seen the lacerating wounds, have heard him
speak dire words: "Wife, save yourself, and flee the disaster
of this wretched city, or if the Carthaginians in victory leave
no space for refuge, Tiburna, flee to me, among the shades.
Our native gods have fallen, we are ruined, the Punic blade
rules all." My mind's in horror, he is still before my eyes.
Shall I see not a stone of you survive, Saguntum? Fortunate
indeed was Murrus to die while his city yet lived, fortunate.
But we, we shall be slaves of the Carthaginian womenfolk,
and after the war, and the dangerous sea-passage, Carthage,
victorious, will behold us; and when death's night befalls,
a captive I will be laid in the soil of Libya. But you, oh
warriors, whose courage prevents your being taken alive,
who find death a potent weapon against this savagery,
rescue your mothers from servitude with your swords.
Arduous the path that reveals virtue. Go then, be the first
to seize a glory unknown till now and difficult to attain.'

BOOK II: 580-608 TISIPHONE MADDENS THE SAGUNTINES

When she had roused her troubled hearers with exhortation,
she approached the mound that Hercules, Amphitryon's son,
had built on the mountain-top, a fitting tribute to the ashes
of Zacynthus, a landmark for sailors, high above the waves.
Then, what horror, at her summons, a serpent emerged from
its den in the depths of the mound; its body was sea-green
flecked with gold; its fiery eyes shone with blood-red flame,
and its jaws with flickering tongue gave out loud hissing.
It slid through the terrified crowds in the midst of the city,
then slipped from the high walls and as if in flight swiftly
headed for the shore near the city, where it then plunged
headlong into the foaming sea. Then indeed minds were
maddened, as if the spirits were fleeing the doomed site,
as if the very shades refused to lie in conquered ground.
The besieged were tired of longing for deliverance, their
sustenance condemned, the disguised Fury seizing them.
No less harsh than the gods' remorselessness, is a death
delayed, and in their frenzy they find their life a burden,
and seek to sever its thread instantly. They vied to build
a pyre, reaching to the sky, in the midst of the city, here
they dragged or carried the rich products of a long peace,
and prizes sought by valour, robes women embroidered
with Galician gold, weapons brought by their ancestors
from Dulichian Zacynthos, and the statues of household
gods brought from ancient Ardea, city of the Rutulians;
all that the besieged still possess they throw on the pile,
and their shields and ill-fated swords, dig from the soil
hoards buried during the wars and, with pride, delight in
consigning the prize of victory to the consuming flame.

BOOK II: 609-649 THE SAGUNTINES ARE DRIVEN TO KILL EACH OTHER

Once the deathly Fury had seen this heap she brandished
the torch she had lately dipped in Phlegethon's fiery wave,
and hid the gods above with the dark of the underworld.

Then the undefeated people began that course of action which their glory in misfortune renders forever famous. Tisiphone began it: indignant at some father slow to kill his offspring, grasping the hilt in triumph, she drove in the reluctant sword; and with dire sound flailed with her Stygian lash, twice, three times. Unwillingly men stain their hands with the blood of their kin, stunned with this crime committed against their wish, and weeping over the wickedness they have perpetrated. Here, one mad with anger, and the lunacy of matricide, that ultimate suffering life allows, averts his gaze from his mother's breast; and there, another snatching an axe and raising it towards the neck of his beloved wife, curses at himself condemns his madness mid-stroke, and hurls the weapon down, in stupefaction. Yet allowing no escape, the Fury lashes him again, and hisses black turmoil from her lips, so that all wedded love flees, the joys of married bliss, and all their union plunges into darkness. Here, again, one exerts all his strength to hurl a sufferer into the fire, where the vertex, a black whirlwind, emits dense fumes, dark as pitch. There in the crowd, ill-fated Tymbrenus, eager to rob the Carthaginians of your father's death, raging, all piety gone awry, you lacerate those features resembling yours, and desecrate limbs like your own. Eurymedon and Lycormas, too, twin brothers, you slay each other in your prime, child so exactly alike child to their mother, that it was a sweet confusion for her to call each by their right name, and know their faces. Now, the sword that penetrates your throat, Eurymedon, saves you from crime: as your poor old mother laments, crying out, distraught with sorrow, mistaking whom she sees: 'What is this? Turn your blade on me, Lycormas' behold Lycormas pierces his own throat with the sword. Still she shouted, misled by the likeness of those two: 'Eurymedon, what madness is this?' a mother calling her dead, by erroneous names, until at last, she drives the steel through her own quivering breast, and sinks down across the bodies of her sons in her confusion.

BOOK II: 650-664 SAGUNTUM BURNS

Who might control their tears as they unfold the dire
events in that city, the monstrous acts deserving praise
as sacrifices made to Fidelity, the sad fate of the pious?
Even the Punic host, enemies unknown to compassion,
might scarce refrain from weeping. A city, long known
to Fidelity, with a god as its founder, falls, neglected
by the unjust heavens, amidst the perfidious weapons
of the Carthaginian people, and its own terrible deeds;
fire and sword run riot, whatever place is not aflame
is the site of wickedness. The pyre throws up a black
cloud of dense smoke to the heights. On the very crest
of the lofty mountain the citadel spared by former wars
is burning (from there the Punic camp, the shore, all
Saguntum can yet be seen) the temples of the gods burn;
Reflected flame lights the sea, fire quivers in the waves.

BOOK II: 665-680 THE DEATH OF THE TRUE TIBURNA

Behold, the true Tiburna in the midst of mad slaughter,
armed in her distress with her husband's bright sword,
brandishing a burning torch in her left hand, with hair
disordered, erect, shoulders bare and her breast bruised
by cruel blows, striding over corpses to Murrus' tomb.
So seems Alecto, the Fury, when the palace of infernal
Dis echoes to the note of doom, and his royal anger stirs
and vexes the shades, and she before the throne, before
the dreadful seat of the god, serves the Jove of Tartarus,
and deals out punishment. Her husband's armour lately
recovered with much bloodshed, she sets on the mound
with tears; prays to the shades to welcome her, and adds
her burning torch, then rushing towards death cries out:
'I myself bear this sword to you, among the shades, oh
best of husbands.' Thus stabbing herself, she falls upon
the armour, speaking from open lips, enters the flames.

BOOK II: 681-707 THE FALL OF SAGUNTUM

Half-consumed by the fire, unfortunate in death, corpses
lay there, without distinction or order, mingled together.
See, when a lion, roused by hunger, with thirst un-slaked,
victorious at last, has stormed the sheepfold, it roars with
gaping maw and devours the helpless sheep, while streams
of blood spill from its vast jaws; then it will crouch down
on the dark heap of half-consumed victims, or gnashing its
teeth and panting hard, roam among the mangled carcases.
Around it in a mass lie the flock and the Molossian hound
that guarded them, the shepherds, and the owner of sheep
and fold, their huts devastated and their roofs demolished.
Now the Carthaginians burst into a citadel left undefended
by utter disaster. Now the Fury, her task done, praised
by Juno, returns to the underworld, proud and exultant,
having carried off with her to Tartarus a host of victims.
But you, starry spirits, no later age can equal, you glory
of the earth, you revered company, go, adorn Elysium,
and the pure dwelling places of the virtuous. While he,
who won fame from unfair victory (be warned you nations,
break no treaties of peace, nor set power above fidelity!)
he, fearful Carthage shall see in full retreat, and banished
from his own shore, an exile, he'll roam the wide earth.
Haunted in sleep by the shades of Saguntum, he'll prefer
death at his own hands; yet, the steel itself denied him,
that once invincible warmonger, will bear, to the waters
of Styx, disfigured limbs, flesh rendered livid by poison.

End of Book II of the Punica

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BOOK III:1-31 BOSTAR CONSULTS THE ORACLE OF AMMON

The treaty with Carthage broken, and the walls of loyal
Saguntum, frowned on by Jupiter, overthrown, the victor
promptly visited those who live at the western limit of our
world, in Phoenician Cadiz. Nor did he neglect to consult
the prophetic minds and the prescient hearts of their seers,
regarding the struggle for power. Bostar was told to sail
at once and to seek prior knowledge of destiny's course.
From earliest times trust was placed in that ancient shrine,
rivalling Delphi's cave, where horned Ammon sits on high
and, among the thirsty Garamantes, reveals the future age,
from his prophetic grove. There were sought good omens
for Hannibal's campaign, an awareness of events to come
before they arrived, the changing fortunes of the conflict.
Then Hannibal prayed at the altars of club-bearing Hercules,
loading them with his spoils, recently seized as the victor
from out the smoke and flames of the citadel of Saguntum.
It was said, no idle tale, that the temple's original beams
resisted decay, through ages no new hand was laid on them,
hence they delight in believing that the god dwells there,
preserving his shrine, and those who possess the right
and honour to penetrate deep within, forbid the women
to approach, banning bristling swine from the threshold.
There is no distinction among robes worn before the altar;
linen covers the body, the head gleams with a Pelusian
fillet. Loosely garbed they offer incense and, following
their fathers' rule, the sacrificial robe bears a broad stripe.
Bare-footed, shaven-headed, their bed admits no other.
A fire on the stones serves the altars perpetually alight,
but no effigies, no customary likenesses of the gods,
fill the sanctuary with their majesty and sacred awe.

BOOK III:32-60 HANNIBAL AT HERCULES' TEMPLE

The doors showed the labours of Hercules. There lay
the Hydra, her snake-heads severed, the throttled lion

of Nemea, displayed with gaping jaws. And Cerberus
guard of the Styx, who scares the shades with his fierce
baying, tore at his leash there, dragged for the very first
time from his eternal lair, and Megaera, fearing the fetter.
Nearby were the Thracian horses of Diomede, the wild
boar Erymanthus' bane, and Diana's bronze-footed stag
its antlers rising above the trees. And that very Antaeus,
child of Libyan soil, no easy conquest when standing
on mother Earth, lay there, and there the deformed race
of the Centaurs, half-horse half-man, and Achelous
river-god of Arcanania, bereft of a horn. Among them
Mount Oeta was seen burning with sacred fire, while
the flames swiftly carried the hero's soul to the stars.
When Hannibal had sated his eyes with all the images
of that valour, he next perceived a marvellous sight.
The Atlantic Ocean suddenly surged towards the land
in a mass of rising waves and no far shore, the fields
were flooded with an oncoming tide. For when Nereus
emerges from his blue caverns, churning the depths
of Neptune's waters, the whole sea erupts, and Ocean,
exposing his hidden bed, rushes on with fierce wave.
Then the deep abyss, as if roused by the savage trident,
seeks to cover the land with swollen sea. But soon
the waves turn back and retreat with the ebbing tide,
ships, robbed of water under their keel, are stranded,
and the benched oarsmen wait for the ocean to return.
The Moon stirs wandering Cymothoe's realm, moves
the deep; the Moon, riding her chariot through the sky,
pulls and tugs at the sea, and so Tethys ebbs and flows.

BOOK III:61-96 HANNIBAL ADDRESSES HIS WIFE AND SON

These sights were viewed by him in haste; many things
troubling Hannibal. His first care was to remove the wife
who shared his bed, and their infant son at the breast,
from risk of war. They had wed when she was a girl,
he a youth, she was bound to him by love and memories,
but the child, born at the siege of Saguntum, had not yet

completed twelve cycles of the moon. Resolving to send
them both away, and remove them from warfare, he then
addressed them thus: ‘Oh, my son, hope of lofty Carthage,
and no less the Romans’ dread, I pray that you may prove
more glorious than your father, and make yourself a name,
with war-deeds beyond your grandfather. Already, Rome,
sick with fear, reckons up those years of yours to come
that will make mothers weep. If my prophetic spirit fails
to deceive my senses, a vast effort to win a world grows
in you. I note my father’s face, the threatening eye below
that frowning brow, the loud cries, elements of my own
wrath. If some god by chance halts my great campaign,
and, with my death, smothers it at inception, let it be
your task, my wife, to protect this pledge of war, when
he can speak lead him to my childhood scenes, let him
lay his youthful hands on Dido’s altar, and swear by his
father’s ashes, to wage war on Rome. Then when riper
age puts hairs on his cheeks, let him seek battle, tread
the treaty underfoot, and in victory demand a tomb for
me, on the Capitol. But you, whose loyalty I reverence,
who can look forward to glory and happiness from him,
leave now the danger and uncertainty of the battlefield.
relinquish hardship. We must face cliffs barred by snow,
and crags that reach the sky. We must turn to that labour.
a fiercer ordeal than war, that made great Hercules sweat,
and his stepmother Juno marvel, we must climb the Alps.
But if Fortune denies her favours, should my efforts falter,
I would wish you long life, and a prolonged old age; your
youth deserves that the Fates spin a thread beyond mine.’

BOOK III:97-127 IMILCE, HIS WIFE, REPLIES

So he spoke, and his wife, Imilce, replied. She was a scion
of Castalius of Delphi, who called a Spanish city, Castulo,
after his mother, which still bears the name of Apollo’s priest.
Thus Imilce traced her ancestry to that sacred stock. When
Bacchus, while conquering the Spanish tribes, took Calpe,
with his Maenads’ thyrsi and spears, one Milichus was born,

of a lustful Satyr and a Spanish nymph Myrice, and he held
a wide realm in his native land. He bore horns on his brow
like his father. It was from him Imilce inherited her nobility
and nationality, the name being corrupted in native speech.
She now spoke, her tears dropping slowly: ‘Do you forget
my life depends on yours, deny me a share in your deeds?
Does our marriage bond, our first nuptial joys, lead you
to believe your wife would fail to climb the frozen heights
with you? Trust in a woman’s strength; no labour is too
great for wedded love. Yet, if you judge by gender alone,
insist on leaving me behind, I will yield to, not hinder,
fate; I ask the god to bless you: go, prosper, favourable
prayers and powers be with you, and amidst the battle
and the glare of arms, remember, keep in mind the wife
and child you relinquish. For indeed, I fear the Romans,
their firebrands and weapons, less than I fear yourself,
you, who rush fiercely against their blades, and expose
yourself to missiles; nor are you satisfied by victory,
your solitary ambition knows no limits, thinking death
in peacetime unworthy of a soldier. Trembling grips
my limbs, yet I fear none who meets you face to face.
But may you, Father of Battles, have mercy, avert all
evil from him, and keep his life safe from the Romans.’

BOOK III:128-157 HANNIBAL SEEKS TO CALM HER FEARS

By now they had reached the shore, and the ship rowed
landward, sailors hanging from the spars, was gradually
trimming her sails to the breeze, when Hannibal, keen
to allay her fears, and lighten a mind sick with frantic
worries, spoke in this manner: ‘My loyal wife, forget
the tears, your anxieties, the end of life is fixed for all;
whether in peace or war, our first day leads to the last.
Their blazing spirit grants a few men eternal fame on
people’s lips, and such the heavenly Father destines
for the skies. Shall I suffer the Roman yoke, Carthage
in servitude? My father’s shade spurs me on, rebukes
me in the darkness of night; that altar and the horrid

sacrifice are before my eyes, the brief and transient
hours forbid delay. Shall I sit here, and let Carthage
alone hear my name, and all the world know me not?
Am I to abandon the heights of glory for fear of death?
What difference between dying and the life obscure?
But fear you no rashness in my hunger for fame: I too
value life, and glory delights in old age, when a man
is still celebrated for his deeds after many a long year.
You too may expect great rewards from this new war;
if the gods so grant, all Tiber, and the Roman women
and the Trojans rich in gold, shall serve you.' As they
spoke together, their tears mingling, the helmsman,
trusting the waves, called to the reluctant wife from
his lofty perch at the stern, Torn from her husband,
she is borne away. Intently their eyes meet and gaze,
until, as the swift ship speeds away over the water,
the shore recedes, and the sea consumes the sight.

BOOK III:158-182 MERCURY IS SENT TO ROUSE HANNIBAL

Now Hannibal prepared to turn from love to the business
of war, swiftly returning to the walls of Cadiz, surveying
them, examining each section intently, until his strength
was exhausted by ceaseless effort, and he could compose
his warlike mind for sleep. Then the all-powerful Father,
in order to test the Roman people amidst danger, to raise
their fame to the skies through fierce warfare, and repeat
their ancestors' ordeal at Troy, spurred on the campaign,
troubling Hannibal's quiet rest, sending him nightmares.
Mercury, god of Cyllene, flew swiftly through the dewy
shades of night, carrying his father's message. Without
delay, he approached Hannibal, who lay soothing his
body in untroubled sleep, and issued this sharp rebuke:
'Oh, ruler of Libya, it is wrong for a general to spend
the whole night slumbering: war is waged by vigilance.
Soon you will see the Roman fleet emerge to plough
the waves, their warriors speeding far over the deep,
while you so slow to start, linger in Spain. Are you
sated then with glory, and with that memorable feat

of arms, such was your labour in conquering Greek
Saguntum? Stir yourself, and if your heart is capable
of bold action, come with me, be a companion to my
call; do not look back (such is Jupiter's command),
I will set you victorious before Rome's high walls.'

BOOK III:183-213 HIS VISION OF THE SERPENT

And now Hannibal dreamed that the god took his arm
and drew him joyfully in haste to Italy, Saturn's land,
when suddenly he was surrounded by noise, a sibilant
hissing of savage tongues, filling the sky behind him.
Then, in intense fear, forgetting the god's admonition,
deeply troubled, he looked back. Behold, a dark serpent,
hissing with fatal blast, sweeping along, in vast embrace,
woodlands, shattered trees, dragging the rocks through
pathless tracts. Huge as the snaky constellation Draco,
which flexes its coils around the Great and Little Bear,
encompassing both with its course, the serpent stretches
its jaws to a gaping vastness, and lifts its crest as high
as the storm-swept mountains. The fury of the bursting
heavens redoubled the sound, hurtling down torrents
of rain mixed with hail. Terrified by this apparition
(for neither sleep nor the power of night gripped him,
since Mercury, his caduceus dispelling darkness, had
mingled light and shadows) Hannibal asked the god
what this dreadful monster meant, and where it went
with that body burdening earth, whom its jaws sought.
Mercury, born in the cold caves of nurturing Cyllene,
answered: 'You witness the war you prayed for. You,
are followed by mighty conflict, ruined forests, fierce
storms in an angry sky, the slaughter of men, and vast
destruction, and a sorrowful fate for the Roman people,
that race of Trojan Mount Ida. Just as the scaly-backed
serpent laid waste the mountains, hurling the uprooted
trees over the plains, sprinkling the wide earth with its
foaming venom, so you will conquer the Alps, hurtling
down to shroud Italy in war; and, with like noise, you
will uproot their cities, and raze their shattered walls.'

BOOK III:214-240 HANNIBAL SETS OUT FOR ITALY

Sleep and the god left him roused by these incitements.
A cold sweat gripped his body, while with fearful joy
he thought of the dream's promise, reviewing the night.
Soon he sacrificed to Mars and the King of the Gods,
in thanks for the favourable omen; but first Mercury,
god of Cyllene, was rewarded for his counsel, with
a snow-white bull at the altar. Then Hannibal ordered
the standards to be raised at once, a sudden clamour
filled the camp with the tremor of discordant voices.
Now, Calliope, render famous those peoples stirred
to this dread campaign, led against Latium's realm;
and the cities of untamed Spaniards Carthage armed;
and the squadrons she mustered on the African shore,
daring to claim the reins of power, to impose a new
yoke on nations. Never did a fiercer tempest blow,
impelled by angry winds. No more violently raged
that fatal war that launched a thousand ships when
a world was gripped by fear. First to the standard
marched the warriors of Tyrian Carthage, slender
of limb, and denied the honour of tall stature, yet
trained to deceive, and never slow to lay hidden
traps for the enemy. Then, carrying a rough shield
they fought with the short sword; went bare-footed
and unbelted, and dressed in red to hide with art
their blood, shed in war. Hannibal's brother Mago
lead them, clad in purple, shining above them all,
to his chariot's rumbling, a living brother in arms.

BOOK III:241-264 THE CARTHAGINIAN TROOP LIST: NORTH AFRICA I

Besides Carthage, Utica poured out her men, the earlier city
founded long before Byrsa, the ancient Carthaginian citadel.
Next Tunisian Clypea, its wall, bordering the sea, built by
Agathocles, tyrant of Syracuse, its ramparts shield-shaped.
But all eyes watched Sychaeus, Hasdrubal's son, their leader,
his heart swelling with vanity, because of his mother's line,

his uncle Hannibal's name ever-present on his proud lips.
The soldiers of sea-washed Berenicis (Benghazi) were there,
nor was arid Barce absent, of thirsty springs, whose men
are armed for battle with long smooth pikes; Cyrene also
roused its scions of Battus for the fight, treacherous folk
descended from Peloponnesian stock, and led by Ilertes,
quick to counsel but slow in war, once praised by Hamilcar.
Then Sabratha and Phoenician Leptis had sent their people,
while Oea had sent Africans mixed with Sicilian colonists,
and Lixus the men of Tingis (Tangiers) from its wild shore.
Next were Vaga and Hippo dear to kings of old, Ruspina
guarding itself from flooding by its distance from the sea,
and Zama, and Thapsus enriched now with Roman blood.
All these forces Antaeus led, a giant in a giant's armour,
serving Hercules' fame by his deeds and name, his head
towering high above the heads of his marching soldiers.

BOOK III:265-299 THE CARTHAGINIAN TROOP LIST: NORTH AFRICA II

The Ethiopians were there, a people who know the reaches
of the Nile, and dig magnetic ore, theirs the sole power
to mine the iron intact by bringing their loadstones near.
Likewise present were the sunburnt Nubae, whose bodies
testify to the merciless orb, wearing neither bronze helms
nor thick steel breastplates, nor armed with bows, who veil
their heads in folds of linen, and with it cover their limbs,
and hurl missiles, their tips steeped in venomous juices,
disgracing the blades with poison. Now the Macae learn,
men from the River Cinyps, how to pitch a tent in camp
in the Phoenician manner; shaggy-bearded warriors, backs
clad in bristling wild goat-hide, who bear curved javelins.
The Adrymachidae though, bore a multi-coloured shield,
and a sword fashioned in the shape of a sickle, a greave
on the left leg. They fed on rough fare, ate a meagre diet,
with their pitiful foodstuffs roasted on the burning sand.
The Massyli, westernmost dwellers on this earth, came
with their glittering standards too, from the Hesperides.
Before them went fierce Bocchus, the hair of his head

curling in close locks, who had seen the sacred garden
by the sea, its golden fruit gleaming among green leaves.
And the Gaetulians left their sites for Hannibal's camp,
who are accustomed to live among packs of wild beasts,
calming the fierceness of untamed lions by their speech;
building no huts, they live in wagons, migrating from
place to place, carrying their nomadic gods with them.
A thousand wing-footed squadrons sped to join the force,
with horses swifter than the wind, taught to obey the whip.
So when the Spartan hounds fill the thickets with baying,
or an Umbrian dog with its keen powers of scent drives
wild creatures along the mountain track, a herd of deer,
fleeing before them, scatters headlong both far and wide.
Acherras led the Gaetulians, with sad face, frowning brow,
for he was brother to that Asbyte so recently slaughtered.

BOOK III:299-324 THE CARTHAGINIAN TROOP LIST: NORTH AFRICA III

Then the Marmoridae appeared, clashing their weapons, a race
with magical powers, at whose spells the snake lost its venom,
and at whose touch the horned serpents lay still and harmless.
Next, the raw warriors of Baniura, poor in iron they are content
to harden their spear-points over a meagre fire, eager for battle,
mingling wild cries with fierce speech. And the Autololes, too,
a fiery race of nimble runners, unmatched by the swift warhorse
or the rapid running river; so fast their speed they vie with birds,
and when they have scoured the plain in flight, you would seek
their footprints in vain. In camp were seen those who eat sweet
fruit from a tree famous for its juice, the tempting lotus berry.
And the Garamantes who fear the maddened snakes spewing
black venom in the immense wastes. Legend has it that when
Perseus killed the Gorgon and carried off her head, her dread
blood dripped from it over Libya, till the land ran with snakes
of Medusa. Choaspes led their thousands, a native of Ithacan
Djerba proven in war, whose lightning-quick right hand ever
bore a javelin, a famous weapon. Here the Nasamones came
from the sea, men who dare to attack wrecks on the waves,

and snatch spoils from the deep. Here came those who dwell
by the deep pools of Lake Tritonis, where Pallas the virgin
warrior goddess sprang from the water, as the legend goes,
anointing Libya first with oil from the olive she discovered.

BOOK III:325-343 THE CARTHAGINIAN TROOP LIST: IBERIA I

All the furthest nations of the west were there, moreover.
The Cantabrians above all, proof against cold, heat, hunger,
conquering every hardship. In their weak and white-haired
old age these people take strange pleasure in cutting short
their years of debility by choosing death, unable to endure
life except in arms: for war indeed is their only reason for
living, and they hate to exist in peace. Astyr the ill-fated
charioteer of Memnon son of the Dawn, was represented
there, for drenched in Aurora's tears he had fled far from
his own land to the opposite side of the world. Asturian
horses are small, not notable in battle, yet pick up speed
without rattling their rider about, or with docile manner
draw a carriage quickly in peacetime. Cydnus led, ready
to scour the heights of the Pyrenees in the hunt, or offer
his Moorish javelin in battle. The Celts were there, too,
who, as Celtiberi, have added the Hiberi to their name.
To die in battle is glorious to them, to cremate the body
of such as do a crime, since they believe the spirit goes
to the gods if some ravenous vulture eats the dead flesh.

BOOK III: 344-377 THE CARTHAGINIAN TROOP LIST: IBERIA II

Rich Galicia sent its men, knowledgeable in the reading
of entrails, the flight of birds, the lightning, who delight
now in crying out barbarous chants in their native tongue,
now in stamping the ground with their feet, clashing their
sounding shields in time to the dance. Such the pleasures
and sport of the men, and such their solemn entertainment.
All other effort is performed by women; the men consider
it unmanly to sow seed in the furrow or turn the soil with

a plough. But Galician wives, un-resting, perform every
task but military service. These men, and the Lusitanians
drawn from remote forests, were led by young Viriathus,
a name made famous much later in warfare against Rome.
Nor were the Cerretani slow to bear arms, they had fought
for Hercules, nor the Vascones, helmetless, nor was Ilerda,
a city that later saw that Roman madness in the civil war;
nor the Concanians, who prove, by their savagery, descent
from the Massagetae, opening their horses' veins to drink.
Now Phoenician Ebusus (Ibiza) is in arms, the Arbacians,
fierce fighters with dart or slender javelin, the Balearic
islanders, Tlepolemus their sire, with Lindus in Rhodes
their native place, waging war with sling and flying lead;
and men sent out by the cities of Oene and Aetolian Tyde,
called Gravii by corruption of their former name, the Graii.
New Carthage, founded by Teucer long ago, sent warriors,
and Emporiae a colony of Marseilles, and Tarragona, place
of vines: its vintage yields to no others but those of Latium.
Outstanding among these men were the Sedetanian soldiers,
with their shining breastplates, who live by the icy waters
of the Sucro, out of the high citadel of their city, Saetabis –
Saetabis which is proud to scorn the Arab looms, vying
in its weaving with Egyptian linen-makers. They were
commanded by Mandonius and Caeso, the famous tamer
of horses, and their joint effort held that force together.

BOOK III: 378-414 THE CARTHAGINIAN TROOP LIST: IBERIA III

Balarus displayed the squadrons of Vettones on the open
plain. In their country, where springs are mild and the air
is warm, the herds of mares, mating in secret, conceive
a mysterious progeny sired by the breeze. But their stock
is short-lived, old age arrives swiftly, and seven years at
the longest is the duration of their lives. Less light of foot
are the horses from Uxama with its Sarmatian walls, yet
the steeds that came from there to the war were tenacious
of life, their raw vigour found it hard to endure the bit,
or obey a rider's commands. Rhyndacus led the men;

armed with spears, they adorn their helmets fearsomely
with gaping jaws of wild beasts; they spend their lives
hunting or live like their fathers by violence and plunder.
Gleaming above the rest were the banners of Delphian
Castulo; Seville, celebrated for its sea-going commerce
and its tidal estuary; Nebrissa which knows the thyrsi
of Bacchus god of Nysea, and is cultivated by nimble
Satyrs and nocturnal Maenads, wearing their sacred
fawn-skin and the mystic vine-leaves. Carteia armed
the scions of Arganthonius, once their king, longest
lived of mankind, fit for war for three hundred years.
Tartessos armed, it views Phoebus setting; Munda
too, due to reproduce Pharsalia's suffering for Italy;
nor did Cordoba fail to honour its gold-bearing soil.
These men were led by blond Phorcys and Arauricus,
a warrior of influence among the corn-bearing lands,
men equal in age; born on those fertile banks where
Guadalquivir winds beneath the shade of olive-trees.
Such were the men the Carthaginian leader, Hannibal,
led over the plains darkened with dust, their bright
banners shining in the field, far as the eye could see,
riding in triumph, leaving a shadow over all the land.
So when Neptune glides in his chariot over the deep,
and directs his bridled horses to the far Ocean where
the sun sinks to rest, all the bands of Nereids emerge
from their caves, swim in rivalry as is their custom,
driving their gleaming arms through the pale water.

BOOK III: 415-441 HERCULES IN THE PYRENEES MOUNTAINS

Hannibal now sought the leafy heights of the Pyrenees,
disturbing the peace of nations. From the leafy summits
of their storm-swept peaks, they command wide views,
and dividing Spain from Gaul form an eternal barrier
between two vast countries. The range takes its name
from a daughter of Bebryx, Pyrene, victim of his guest,
Hercules. For when he was seeking that distant country
of three-bodied Geryon, in the course of his fated labours,

he was overcome with drunkenness at Bebryx's savage
court, and robbed her of her virginity, her beauty a cause
for grief. The god (if it is lawful to believe it) the god
was the reason for the wretched girl's death, for, giving
birth to a serpent, at once she fled her beloved home,
in horror and dread of her father's anger. She grieved,
in lonely caves, for that one night with her Hercules,
telling the dark forests of the promises he had made,
and, while she was lamenting her lover's ingratitude,
stretching out her hands, summoning the hero's aid,
she was destroyed at last by wild beasts. Returning,
in victory, having disposed of Geryon, he drenched
her lacerated limbs in tears, so distraught in his grief
he turned pale, seeing the face of a girl he had loved.
Then the mountain heights were shaken by his cries;
with loud lament he called for his Pyrene, while all
the cliffs, and haunts of wild creatures repeated her
name. Then with tears for the dead he laid her body
in the grave; nor will the centuries eclipse her fame,
the hills forever keep that name that brought tears.

BOOK III: 442-476 HANNIBAL CROSSES THE RHONE AND DURANCE

Now marching through mountains, dense pine-woods,
Hannibal left behind the realm of the Bebrycian king.
Then he boldly forced a path through the inhospitable
lands of the Volcae, ravaging them in his swift course
and reached the menacing banks of the swollen Rhone.
Rising on the snowy peaks of the Alps, the river flows
through Gaul, swelling to a vast stream, cuts through
the plains, all foaming, and rushes swiftly to its broad
estuary, and the sea. The Saône, whose silent current
seems at rest, augments the Rhone, which embraces
these seemingly reluctant waters in a restless flow,
denies, as it rushes through the land, their own name
to neighbouring shores, and plunges them in the sea.
The soldiers readily plunged into the Rhone's waters
no bridge can survive, some, head and shoulders held

high, protecting their weapons, other men competing,
with vigorous strokes of their arms, to cleave the flow.
The horses were haltered, then ferried over in barges;
nor did the elephants' terror delay the crossing, since
the men tethered rafts along the river, covered their
decks with a layer of soil then, slacking the cables,
gradually, floated the rafts with their Libyan beasts
from the high bank, out over the deep water. At this
invasion of trumpeting creatures, the troubled Rhone,
feeling the burden of these dusky monsters, reversed
its flow, while rumbling darkly from its sandy depths.
Now the armies pressed on through Tricastini lands,
then marched on easily through the Vocontii country.
But here the Durance, turbid with rocks and branches,
hindered the general's ready progress. Born in the Alps,
it bears, with a roar, uprooted ash-trees, and boulders
torn from the cliffs, in its raging course, obliterating
the fords in its deceptively altering course, such that
the traveller cannot cross on foot, no vessel is safe.
And now, swollen with recent rain, it snatched away
many armed men, whirling them in its foaming eddies,
drowning deep the lacerated bodies and mangled limbs.

BOOK III: 477-499 HANNIBAL APPROACHES THE ALPS

But now thought of past efforts was lost in apprehension,
when they saw the Alps close at hand. The whole range
is shrouded by eternal rime and hoar-frost that encases
the ice of ages; the steep faces of the high peaks tower
against the rising sun yet the hardened slopes are never
melted by its rays. As far as the gulf yawns, that splits
our upper world from the shadowy realms of Tartarus,
reaching to the shades below and the pools of the dark
marshes, so high does the earth here rise through the air,
obscuring the sky with its shadow. There is no Spring
or lovely Summer here; only endless bare Winter keeps
these dreadful heights, driving on black storm-clouds
and rain confused with hail. Moreover, all of the winds

and gales find their home in this furious Alpine realm.
The eye is troubled by the soaring cliffs, the peaks
are lost in the clouds. Mount Athos piled on Taurus,
Rhodope on Mimas, Pelion heaped on Ossa, Othrys
on Haemus, must yield to the Alps. Hercules first
set foot amongst these untouched citadels, a sight
for the gods as he split the clouds, brought the high
mountains low, and with his sheer strength tamed
rocks untrodden in those long ages since their birth.

BOOK III: 500-539 HANNIBAL FORCES THE ASCENT

The soldiers moved slowly, and with uncertain step,
as if they were carrying impious arms, defying nature,
beyond the world's sacred boundary, against the gods.
Their general countered all this (he being untroubled
by the Alps and their terrors, exhorting his men who
were faint with fear, lifting their courage, reviving
their vigour) crying: 'Have you no shame, sluggards,
weary of victory and the gods' favour, retreating now,
after glory won in the thick of war, before snowy peaks,
and yielding to mere cliffs? Now, oh now, my friends,
think that you climb now the walls of imperial Rome,
and Jupiter's high Capitol. This labour shall grant us
an Italy and a Tiber in chains.' Without more delay,
persuading them by promises of riches, he roused
the men to climb, commanding them to relinquish
the route forged by Hercules, to march over fresh
ground, ascending by a path of their own making.
He forced a passage where none had been, first
to conquer the heights, calling from the craggy
summit for the troops to follow. Then, wherever
the slopes were solid with frozen ice, the slippery
route over the snow-slopes thwarting them, he cut
steps into the resistant ground with steel. Melting
snow swallowed the men in crevasses, or rushing
from the heights buried the troops in avalanches.
Meanwhile a harsh north-westerly, on dark wings,

drove the snow, congealing in that opposing gale,
full in their faces; or the vast roaring of the raging
storm tore their shields away, and whirling them
upwards the spiralling gale blew them to the clouds.
The higher they climbed in their struggle to ascend
the ridge, the greater the effort. Conquering the one
height, wearily they see another rising before them,
and they cannot bear to look back at the hardships
they have overcome by toil, for such was the dread
with which the featureless snow struck their eyes;
as a single frozen whiteness met the gaze wherever
their sight could reach. So when a sailor mid-ocean
leaves the land he loves behind, when the flapping
sails on his useless mast can find no wind, he sees
only a boundless waste, wearily refreshing his eyes
by turning them to the sky, defeated by the depths.

BOOK III: 540-556 A DIFFICULT PASSAGE TO THE RIDGE

Now, after the difficulties and disasters of the climb,
half-savage men showed their faces among the rocks,
filthy faces, with matted dirt fouling the tangled hair.
These Alpine tribes, emerging from caves in the rocks,
attacked them, flying through thorn-scrub with ease,
accustomed to the snow-fields and the pathless cliffs,
the beleaguered army prey to the nimble mountaineers.
Now the place had a different look: here the snow was
dyed crimson with blood, there the unconquered ice
gradually yielded to the warmth of those effusions;
and where the horses stamp their hooves, their feet
stick fast in the ground they pierce. Nor is falling
the only risk, for men leave flesh behind severed
by the cold, shattered limbs amputated by the ice.
Twelve days, twelve nights they spent in dreadful
suffering, before reaching the longed-for summit,
and pitching camp high on the precipitous cliffs.

BOOK III: 557-569 VENUS COMPLAINS TO JOVE

Now Venus, her mind troubled by doubt and fear,
addressed her father, breaking out in sad lament:
'When will this punishment of the Romans end,
I pray, what limit do you set to their destruction?
After their wanderings over land and sea, when
will you grant them a fixed abode? Why should
this Carthaginian attempt to drive my offspring
from the city you conceded to them? He has set
Libya upon the Alps, threatens an end to empire.
Rome now fears Saguntum's fate. Grant a place,
Father, to rest in safety, to which we may bear,
at last, the ashes and sacred relics of ruined Troy,
the household gods of Assaracus, the son of Tros,
and the flame of Vesta. Is it not enough for you,
our wandering the earth seeking a place of exile?
Or must Rome be captured, Troy fall once more?'

BOOK III: 570-629 JUPITER REPLIES WITH A PANEGYRIC OF THE FLAVIANS

So Venus spoke; and then her father replied thus:
'Fear not, Cytherea, nor be troubled by the Tyrian
campaign; your offspring hold and long shall hold
the Tarpeian Rock. Yet I intend to test them with
this conflict, and try their courage in war. A race,
steadfast in battle, joying in conquering hardship,
are lapsing little by little from their ancestral glory;
those who never failed to yield blood for honour
and thirsted always for fame, now pass their time
in obscure inaction, spend their life in inglorious
silence, though my blood runs in their veins, their
virtue is slowly weakened and lost by the bland
poison of indolence. It is a mighty work, needing
immense effort to claim sole power over so many
nations. Already a time is coming when you will
see Rome ruling all, more glorious for these ills.
This action shall produce famous men, worthy

of my kingdom; you'll praise Aemilius Paulus,
Fabius Maximus, and Claudius Marcellus, who
has pleased me by gaining the greatest of spoils.
These men, despite defeats, will win for Latium
so great an empire even their offspring will not
destroy it, for all their luxuries and fickle hearts.
Already Scipio is born who shall drive Hannibal
out of Latium, back to his native land, dispossess
him of all his armour before the walls of Carthage,
and then Cytherea, your folk shall reign long ages.
Later, heavenly excellence will spring from Cures,
and rise to the stars, a warlike house, nourished
by the olive that grows in Sabine lands, shall add
to the fame of the deified Julii. Vespasian, father
of that house, will grant Rome victory over Thule,
till then unknown to us, and be the first to send
an army through the Caledonian forests; he will
tame the Rhine, rule Africa with his energy and,
in old age, subdue the Judean palm-groves in war.
Nor will he go to the pools of Styx and the realm
deprived of light, but to the dwellings of the gods
and the honours we all enjoy. Then Titus, his son,
greatly excelling in strength of mind, will take up
his father's task and be borne to the heights, his
head raised high to match his power. Still a youth,
he will end that conflict with the uncivilised tribes
in Palestine. But you, Domitian, ruler of Germany,
will transcend their deeds, already, as a child, feared
by blond-haired Batavians. The fire in the Tarpeian
Temple will not harm you, you will be saved for
mankind's sake from the midst of impious flames,
and in the far future share in our heavenly realm.
The warriors of the Ganges will one day lower
their slackened bows before him, and Parthia will
display its empty quivers. He will ride a triumphal
chariot through Rome after conquering the North,
and triumph in the East, Bacchus yielding to him.
When the Danube refuses passage to the standards,
as the victor in Sarmatia he will control the river.

And he will outdo the sons of Romulus in oratory,
all who won honour by their eloquence; the Muses
shall bring him offerings, Apollo admire his verse,
a sweeter strain than that of Orpheus, who stilled
the Hebrus, moved Mount Rhodope. He will raise
a golden temple on the Tarpeian Rock, where now,
as you see, my ancient palace stands, and heighten
the summit of the shrine to reach our celestial home.
O son of the deified, and the father of gods to be,
rule then the fortunate earth with ancestral power.
Heaven will welcome you after a lengthy old age,
and Romulus as Quirinus yield, to you, his throne;
your father, your brother will set you between them,
and send out rays like the brow of your deified son.'

BOOK III: 630-646 HANNIBAL ENTERS ITALY

While Jove was revealing the course of future events,
Hannibal was descending the hostile slopes, trying
to gain a foothold on the trackless cliffs, and sliding
over wet rock. No enemy army opposed him; only
the menacing steepness of the drop, the boulders
against rock-walls troubled him. Men halted, as if
prisoned, lamenting the obstacles, the harshness
of the route. Nor could they ease their frozen bodies
in rest; labouring all night, forced to bear timber
on their shoulders, tearing ash-trees from the hills;
then, having cleared those slopes where the forest
was thickest, piling the wood in a heap, firing it till
the rock was eroded by fierce flame. Then the heavy
mass broke, splitting before the axe, with a groan,
opening ancient Latinus' realm to the weary men.
After, these efforts, traversing the untrodden Alps,
Hannibal pitched his camp on the plains of Turin.

BOOK III: 647-714 BOSTAR BRINGS THE ORACLE'S RESPONSE

Now, Bostar came bearing Jove's oracular response,
full of joy having crossed the sands of the Garamantes
and roused Hannibal, as if he had seen Jupiter himself:
'Great scion of Belus, whose might protects the walls
of our citadel from servitude, we saw the Libyan shrine.
The Syrtis, drenching the heavens, bore us to the gods,
and the land, fiercer than the sea, almost swallowed us.
From the very midst of the earth to the ends of the sky,
all is a barren waste. Nature forbids all elevation there,
in that limitless tract, save where a whirlwind, dense
with thickening sand, driving along in unsolid clouds,
builds a dune; or where a south-westerly escaping from
its cave, devastates the earth, and a fierce north-westerly,
driving the sea across the skies, falls on that plain, set
for their conflict, raising in turn heaps of blown sand.
We headed over these dunes by observing the stars;
for the way is lost in the light, but the Little Bear
that faithfully guides the Phoenician sailor, here
leads the traveller wandering over the sandy deep,
staring endlessly at the desert wastes around him.
Then, when we came, weary, to the tree-filled
oasis, and the groves and the gleaming temple
of horned Ammon, we were welcomed as guests
by Arisbas, who led us to his home. Beside this
shrine, is a wondrous marvel, a spring with water
which feels tepid at the rise and the close of day,
but cold when the midday sun lights the heavens,
and again this same spring boils at dead of night.
Then the old man showed us the sites filled with
the god, and fields that bear without the plough,
and addressed us as follows with a joyous heart:
"Bow down in prayer, Bostar, before these shady
groves, this roof that soars to heaven, these trees
where Jove has walked. For who in the world has
not heard of Jove's gift, twin doves that perched
on Thebe's lap? One flew to the shores of Chaonia,

and fills Dodona's oak with prophetic murmuring.
But the other sailed the sky above the Aegean Sea,
flew on dark wings to the dark-skinned Libyans,
this bird of Venus electing a site for the temple.
Here, where you see the altar and the shady grove,
the dove, strange to tell, chose a ram, the leader
of its flock, and perching between the horns on
its fleecy head, prophesied to the Marmaridae.
Later trees sprang unannounced from the earth,
and a grove of ancient oaks, and as the branches
touch the sky, so they grew on the very first day.
Hence the grove is sacred, held in primal awe,
and worshipped with warm streaming altars."
While we wondered at his words, the doors
of a sudden flew open with a tremendous crash,
the light at once grew brighter before our eyes,
and before the altar a priest stood, gleaming
in his white robe, and the people vied to enter.
When I had spoken the message I had brought,
behold, the god then entered into his prophet.
The quivering trees hummed with a deep sound,
and a murmur passed through the grove; then
a voice louder than any we know issued out:
"Libyans, who invade Latium, ready to wage
war against the Roman scions of Assaracus.
I see a hard campaign, fierce Mars mounting
his chariot now, his furious steeds breathing
dark flame against the West, blood streaming
from his reins. You then, who seek to know
the outcome of that conflict, its destined end,
advance your wings boldly, in glorious effort,
against Diomede's Apulia, the Iapygian plain;
you will honour your Phoenician ancestors,
for after you, none shall wound the Roman
race more deeply, while their Trojan realm
still trembles to your victories. Nor shall
that race of Saturn ever live free from care,
while Hannibal breathes in the upper world." '
Such was the joyous prophecy that Bostar
brought, filling the army with lust for battle.

End of Book III of the Punica

BOOK IV

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BOOK IV:1-38 ITALY PREPARES FOR WAR

News spread through the troubled cities of Italy crying that the cloudy peaks and the rocky ridge with its sky-threatening cliffs had been conquered, the Carthaginians having descended from the Alps by trackless ways, with Hannibal boasting a deed that rivalled the labour of Hercules. Cruel Rumour prophesied dire commotion, shaking the terrified cities with wild reports, and growing as it passed, moving more swiftly than the wings of the wind. Fear, exaggerating what it heard, was quick to feed the common talk on lies. Men applied themselves suddenly to the business of war, as Mars swiftly sounded out Italy, summoning up arms and men. They renew their javelins, the steel freed from rust takes on its savage gleam, and helmets laid aside refresh their splendour with snowy plumes; spears are strengthened with thongs, axes forged anew. The breastplate, fashioned to divert many a thrust and failed blow, is fitted to form an impenetrable defence for the flesh. Some sit late mending bows, some tame panting circling steeds with the whip, and others whet blades on stone. Nor are men slow to mend those walls that time has ravaged, bringing stone, remaking hollow turrets dilapidated with age. Missiles are stored in citadels, now the men hasten to fetch oak-timber from the forests to repair their gates with solid bars, and to dig the moats around. Fear, their master, speeds the work, while terror is loose in deserted fields. Homes are left behind, as men carry ailing mothers on their shoulders, drag along the aged at the end of their lives. They drive before them wives with dishevelled hair, behind them come little children with their shorter step, clinging to their father’s hands. So the people flee, passing on fear to each other, not seeking its cause. Yet the Senate, though secretly alarmed by a war

so savagely begun, and this crossing of the Alps,
met the danger with unshaken minds and great
courage: inspired to pass through peril to glory,
and build, by strength of arms, such a monument
to Fame as Fortune had never granted in success.

BOOK IV:39-66 HANNIBAL EXHORTS HIS TROOPS TO BATTLE

But Hannibal nursed his strength behind his defences,
the men being weary from their march, their muscles
stiff from the endless cold; while, by way of solace, he
pronounced to them that the way to Rome led now over
level ground, and the city was at their mercy. And yet,
he approved no pause in his own affairs and his plan
of campaign, he alone unable to suffer rest. Armed
Gauls, once before, in ancient times, had invaded
the fruitful lands of Italy, and spread terror by force;
then Tarpeian Jupiter, and the conquered Quirites,
had swiftly felt the shock of sacrilegious warfare.
But while Hannibal was trying to bribe the Gauls,
working on that people's foolish hearts and fickle
ways, attempting to forge an alliance with them,
Scipio the Consul, was returning from Marseilles,
a Phocaean city, skimming the coast in a fast ship;
each of these great leaders had ended a hard task,
one on land, the other at sea, a more immediate
confrontation awaited, and our path to disaster
had begun. For when the Consul arrived, when
the armies came together, Fate ended all delay,
as the soldiers, roused by the sight of the enemy,
demanded the signal for a furious assault. Then
Hannibal's voice rose loud above his vast host:
'Have we not tamed all of distant Spain; neither
the Pyrenees nor the proud Rhone have scorned
to do our bidding, and Rutulian Saguntum burns;
we forced a road through Gaul, and you warriors
of Carthage marched, in arms, where Hercules
laboured to set foot; our horsemen have gained

the heights, trampled the ridges, and the Alps
themselves echoed to the snorting of our steeds.'

BOOK IV:67-87 SCIPIO THE CONSUL AT THE TICINUS (TICINO) 218BC

Opposite him, the consul called his men to glorious
conflict: 'Soldiers, the enemy drag their frozen limbs
with difficulty, weakened and frost-bitten by Alpine
snows. They may have threaded untrodden mountains,
and rocky chasms, but let them find how much higher
our ramparts are than Saguntum's, and which task is
harder, climbing hills or breaking through your ranks.
Grant them their vain exploit, let the Alps confront
them when, routed in mighty battle, they crawl back
the way they came. The gods brought them here, led
them over the heights, merely to drench our Latium
with their blood, and leave their bones on enemy soil.
Tell me, is this war waged by a new altered Carthage,
or by that same Carthage that foundered in the waves,
lies drowned in the vast deeps off the Aegatian Isles?
So speaking, he diverted their march to the Ticinus.
That clear river in its shallow bed, free of turbulence,
holds pools of blue water, its bright stream flowing
so fresh and slow you would barely think it moves;
sliding so gently between shady banks, where birds
vie in their melodious singing, its gleaming waters
bring sleep, with its shining flood, to the passer-by.

BOOK IV:88-119 PREPARATIONS AND AN OMEN

Now, as the shadows fled and night ended, dawn
arrived and Sleep had fulfilled its destined hours,
the consul prepared to view the ground, the nature
of the hills nearby, and the character of the plain.
Hannibal owned to the same intent and the same
anxiety at heart. So the two generals approached,
accompanied by their swiftest cavalry squadrons.

When the clouds of rising dust showed the armies
were on the march, and the earth rang to the sound
of ever-nearing hooves, the trumpets drowned by
the eager neighing of the horses, both the leaders
cried out: ‘To arms and quickly, warriors to arms!’
Both showed restless courage, and the thirst for
glory, twin spirits in their love of war and conflict.
There was no delay, and soon they were separated
by only the space a thong-thrown lance can cover,
when suddenly all eyes and thoughts were turned
on the sky, where a portent appeared in the clear
and cloudless air. A hawk flying from the south
fiercely attacked a flock of doves, dear to Venus,
who to that same Dione’s favour owe their fame.
It had cruelly wounded and killed fifteen of them,
with beak, or talons, or fierce blows of its wings.
Nor was it sated, its ardour for fresh blood grew,
it drove the last dove hard, as she wavered in her
flight on weary wings, terrified by the slaughter,
until an eagle rising out the east forced the hawk
to seek refuge at last high in the billowing clouds.
Then the dove, unvanquished, turned and flew
to the Roman eagles, where the Consul’s son,
named Cornelius Scipio also, brandished his
gleaming weapons with boyish strength, then,
after calling thrice, and pecking at the plume
of his glittering helm, she returned to the sky.

BOOK IV:120-142 INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PORTENT

Liger the seer (a master skilled in perceiving
heaven’s warnings and foretelling the future
from the flight of birds) called out: ‘Hannibal,
like that bold hawk you will pursue Romans
within the Italian lands, carrying off plunder,
and shedding much blood. But restrain your
threats, for behold, Jupiter’s armour-bearer,

the eagle, withholds that realm from you. I
know you, mightiest of the gods. O Father,
be here, confirm the omen your bird offers!
For (unless the bird misrepresents the gods,
and his flight means naught) this boy will
forge conquered Libya's ultimate fate, and
greater fame himself than that of Carthage.'
But, countering, the seer Bogus prophesied
good fortune for Hannibal, saying the hawk
was a favourable sign, while the slaughter
of the doves on the wing foretold disaster
for the Romans, the descendants of Venus.
And, to suit his words, he hurled the first
spear against the enemy, as if prompted by
the gods, and aware of the future. The dart
flying through the empty air above the wide
plain would have failed of its effect had not
Catus, eager to win glory in this first onset,
ridden his horse full tilt to meet it; the spear,
though sinking on its way, and about to fall,
found the mark, thus gifted it by the enemy,
piercing the temples offered by that brow.

BOOK IV:143-188 CRIXUS THE CELT CAUSES DAMAGE

The armies advanced, and a mighty clamour
overspread the field, as the riders gave their
chargers the head, and urged them onwards:
rearing, they galloped on, in stormy flight,
leaving barely a trace of their hooves over
the dusty plain. A swift squadron of Boii,
led by Crixus the Celt, far ahead of the rest,
struck the Roman front line, and blocked
its path with their immense bodies. Crixus,
proud of his ancestry, claimed descent from
Brennus, famed for the taking of the Capitol.
On his shield, the madman showed the Gauls
there on the sacred summit of the Tarpeian hill,

weighing out the gold. A gleaming torc shone
on his pallid neck, his garments were trimmed
with gold, his gauntlets showed stiff with gold,
and the like metal glowed on his helmet crest.
The mighty charge struck the men of Camerium
holding the front line, so the Boii overran their
close-packed spears in dense waves, meanwhile
the accursed Senones joined the Boii, swelling
their ranks, and the corpses of men, shattered
by the horses' chests, rolled across the ground.
The field drenched, deep pools of blood from
men and horses, swallow the slippery prints
of the fighting squadron. Those half-dead are
killed outright by the weight of hooves, while
the wheeling horses scatter a hideous bloody
dew on the earth, the poor wretches' armour
drenched with their gore. Proud Pelorus threw
the first javelin to find its mark, now stained
with the bright life-blood of young Tyrrhenus.
For the barbarian's missile struck him as he
blew his trumpet to stir the soldiers' hearts,
rouse their warlike courage and, at that sound,
face wounds afresh; piercing his throat with
a fatal wound, stifling the horn's hoarse notes.
Yet a last sound issuing from dying lips, slid
through the curving instrument, while the lips
themselves fell silent. Crixus now killed Picens
and Laurus, not from equally afar, for though
Picens was killed by a shining spear, cut on
the banks of the River Po, Laurus was killed
by the sword. Picens had tried to turn away,
and escape his enemy by wheeling to the left,
but the dread spear pierced the rider's thigh
and the unprotected underbelly of his fleeing
mount, inflicting a double death. Then Crixus
tore his weapon from Venulus' bloody neck,
downed you, Farfarus, with the still-warm tip,
and you, Tullus, born by Velinus' chill stream,
destined to be the glory of Italy and a famous

name, if the Fates had granted you longer life,
or if the Carthaginians had held to the treaty.
Next he killed Remulus, and others notable
once in war, the Magii from Tibur, Metaurus
of Hispellum, Clanius with premeditated blows
of a spear, spoilt for choice as to where to strike.

BOOK IV:143-215 THE DEATH OF QUIRINIUS

The Carthaginians were excluded from the fight,
since the Gauls raged throughout the field; none
hurled a spear in vain, all transfixed the enemy.
Now, Quirinius, to whom retreat was unknown,
showed great daring though all around trembled,
choosing to face death, with fate so against him.
He spurred his mount with a spear-point, hurling
javelins with his huge arm, in hopes of clearing
a passage, and reaching Crixus, by main force.
Certain of death, he sought, with great courage,
a glory he would never boast of. Teutalus fell
before him, pierced in the groin, as the ground
shook beneath his vast weight. Then Sarmens,
who had vowed his auburn locks to Mars were
he victorious, hair that vied with gold, as well
as the tawny top-knot which crowned his head.
But the Fates dragged him down to the shades,
his locks unshorn, and his vow unheard, hot
blood drenching his pale limbs, as the moist
earth soaked red. Now Ligianus, undeterred
by the javelin that faced him, rushed forward
and whirled his sword full in Quirinius' face,
rose as he struck, so that Quirinius' left arm
was severed by the blow, at the point where
the sinewy muscles attach it to the shoulder,
leaving it hanging by a thread for a moment
over the slack reins in that quivering hand,
which yet clung to them with weakened hold,
as he unconsciously turned his mount aside.

Then Vosegus severed his head from behind,
carrying off the head and helm by the plume,
while saluting the gods with a native war-cry.

BOOK IV:216-247 SCIPIO THE CONSUL ATTACKS

While the Gauls were dealing death over the
field like this, the Consul summoned up his
troops in haste from their camp and, high on
his white steed, charged headlong at the foe.
He led men from every part of fertile Italy,
Marsians; soldiers from Cori; Laurentum's
pride; Sabine javelin-throwers; hill-dwellers
from Todi who worshipped Mars; fighters
from Falerii too, clothed in their local flax;
those bred beside the orchards of Catillus,
beside the Anio, where the flow runs silent
under the walls of Hercules' Tivoli; those
sent out from the misty fields of Cassino,
and those supplied by the Hernician hills,
a tough race dwelling by their icy streams.
So did the sons of Italy go forth to battle,
yet the gods had doomed these warriors,
fated never to return. Scipio the Consul
drove on his mount to where the central
vortex of the battle had swallowed them,
and, roused by the slaughter of his army,
he sent to the shades Labarus and Padus,
Caunus, and Brucus slain with difficulty
receiving many wounds, and Larus who
rolled his eyes in a Gorgon glare. Cruel
too the fate that felled brave Leponticus;
for, throwing himself fiercely in the way,
catching hold of the Consul's reins, then,
though on foot himself, reaching up to
the rider's face, he was felled by the heavy
sword striking the centre of his forehead,
his head being split apart to the shoulder.

Then Batus, striking wildly at Scipio's
steed, warding it away with his shield,
was flung to the yellow sand by a blow,
his face crushed by the stamping hooves.
So the Roman general raged over that
plain, turbulent as when Thracian Boreas,
the north wind in triumph, stirs the whole
Icarian Sea to its depths, vessels founder,
sailors are hurled about the mighty waters,
and the Cyclades drown in a foaming flood.

BOOK IV:248-310 SCIPIO THE CONSUL KILLS CRIXUS

With slender hope, and less chance of survival,
Crixus armed himself with contempt for death,
his bristling beard bright with a crimson foam,
his gaping mouth foaming white, in his fury,
his hair coated thickly with dust. He attacked
Tarius, who was fighting beside the Consul,
thundering around him, in a furious assault.
Tarius rolled on the ground, the fatal spear
forcing him over his horse's neck, until he
was dragged along by the frightened beast,
his feet all entangled in the encircling girth.
Blood marked the plain, leaving long traces
there, his spear scoring the sand, unevenly.
Scipio the Consul praised the youth in death,
preparing himself to avenge that noble spirit,
when a dire sound met his ear; he knew by
the shout, not by the face, that it was Crixus.
As they met his anger rose, and he fixed his
eye on that victim he desired. Then spurring
his mount, while patting its neck to honour
and please it, he spoke to the creature thus:
'Leave those lesser cattle till later, Garganus,
for the gods summon us to greater things.
See, the mighty Crixus? Now I promise you
the gift of that saddle-cloth, bright with Tyrian
purple meet for a savage, and the golden reins.'

So saying, he challenged Crixus to the combat,
demanding an open space to contest their duel.
His enemy, equally ardent, was no malingerer.
As the ranks on both sides gave way as ordered
leaving a clear space, they took the centre-field.
Like the Giant Mimus, the son of Earth, when
he fought on Phlegra's plain, terrifying Heaven,
so Crixus raised cries from a half-bestial chest,
rousing his own fury with his hideous screams.
'Were there none left to show you the strength
of arm the people of Brennus showed in battle,
once Rome was taken and burnt? Feel it now!'
Then, so saying, he hurled his knotted spear
with its fire-hardened tip, one strong enough to
level even a city gate. It gave a dreadful sound
as it flew but, thrown too far and the distance
misjudged, it soared over the Consul's head.
Then Scipio replied: 'Take this to the shades
below, and to your ancestor Brennus, tell them
how far away from the Tarpeian Rock you fell,
you who were not allowed to see the Capitol's
sacred hill.' So, adding power to his own spear,
making use of the thong and his horse's speed,
he hurled it with an effort worthy of a giant foe.
It flew through the many layers of Crixus' linen
breastplate and through his shield made of hide,
and pierced his chest to the full blade's length.
Crixus fell, his body stretched far on the field,
and the earth groaned, to his gigantic armour.
So Nereus roars, when masons build out above
the Tuscan shore hurling masses of rock from
the heights with a loud crash into the waters,
to counter the waves and the hidden currents
below, the depths split by the blow receiving
the mighty load as it falls into the angry sea.
Deprived of their leader, the Celts took flight,
all their confidence and ardour depending on
that single life. When a hunter on the heights
of Mount Picanus fires the wild beasts' dens,

spreading his dark destruction through their
crowded lairs amongst the pathless thickets,
so the flames silently gather strength, while
the tops of the pines are gradually cloaked
in black smoke, the dense vapour eddying
to the sky; and soon they light the mountain
everywhere, and a crackling sound is heard,
wild beasts flee, and the birds, while cattle
startle in the depths of the distant valleys.

BOOK IV:311-323 THE TWO SIDES SEEK ADVANTAGE

When Mago, Hannibal's brother, saw them run,
that the first attack had failed with that people's
sole effort, he summoned his own men to battle,
his nation's cavalry: who rode to him from every
side, those who rode to the bridle or used none.
Now the men of Italy wheel their mounts and fly,
now panic drives the Carthaginian horse to retreat;
either the one swing right in crescent formation,
or the other curve to the left, in a flanking move;
alternately they weave their sinuous ranks en masse,
and then un-weave them again, with skill, in retreat.
So when winds conflict, a northerly drives the sea
along, then in turn an easterly opposes, and with
alternate blasts the mighty deep flows to and fro.

BOOK IV:324-354 HANNIBAL ON THE RAMPAGE

The Carthaginian general rode up, gleaming with
purple and gold, round him Fear, Terror, Frenzy.
As he raised the bright disc of his Galician shield,
shedding a vast light on the field, hope and courage
fled, and fearful hearts felt no shame in retreating;
all were for flight, no longer desirous of a glorious
death, while praying the earth might swallow them.
So, when the tigress exits her den in the Caucasus,

the plain empties and the herds, afraid of her fearful
aspect, all seek a safe hiding-place, while she roams
triumphant through deserted valleys, retracting her
lips, and gradually baring her teeth, as if devouring
actual flesh, and with gaping jaws meditates carnage.
Neither Metabus, nor Ufens for all his greater stature
could escape Hannibal, though the latter ran swiftly,
while the former gave his horse full rein. For a spear,
with gleaming blade, sent Metabus to the shadows;
while the sword felled hamstrung Ufens, who lost,
at once, both his life and his reputation for speed.
Hannibal killed Sthenius, Laurus then Collinus
born in the cool lands, nurtured by Lake Fucinus
in its mossy caves, given leave to swim its waters.
Massicus, struck by a spear, was their companion
in death, born on the holy heights of the vine-clad
mount of that name, with the waters of the Liris
to drink, whose placid stream conceals its flow
and, unaffected by rain, brushes the silent banks
with its sparkling flood. Now furious slaughter
commenced, weapons scarcely sufficing in their
madness; shield clashes with shield, foot meets
foot, plumes waving to touch on the foe's brow.

BOOK IV:355-400 TWO TRIOS OF BROTHERS DIE

A trio of brothers, born to fight, fought in the front
rank for Carthage, sons of Barce whom their fertile
mother bore to Xanthippus the Spartan, at the time
of the First War. Their hearts were swollen by pride
in the past deeds of those Greeks their father led,
the fame of Sparta, the fetter they fastened round
Regulus' neck. The trio burned to prove by their
achievements their descent from a Spartan sire,
and visit after them the chill heights of Taygetus,
and swim at last, with the war over, in their native
Eurotas, bound to the laws and customs of Lycurgus.
Yet they never reached Sparta, for the gods and three

Italian brothers prevented it, a trio of the same age
the same courage, sent by the tall groves of Egeria,
and Aricia's inexorable sacred shrine, a harsh Fate
denying them the sight of Diana's Nemi once more.
Thus Xanthippus, proud bearer of his father's name,
with Eumachus and Critias, his brothers, swept on
by the tide of battle, faced these Romans. As when
lions, warring in fury, filling the desert wastelands,
and the distant villages with their hoarse roaring,
send the Moors running for high crags, untrodden
ways, while the African mothers clasp their infants
to the flowing breast to still their cries, as the dire
sounds rise, as the lions' shattered bones crack in
blood-stained jaws, their broken limbs straining
still in the grip of cruel teeth. Even so Egeria's
sons, Virbius, Capys, Albanus sprang forward.
Now Critias, crouching down, stabbed Albanus
in the guts (all his innards suddenly spilling out
into his shield, a wretched sight), then Eumachus
struck at Capys, but though Capys gripped his
shield with all his might, as though it were fixed
to him, a cruel sword-stroke severed the left arm
that held it, and the hand not loosening its hold
still grasped its disc, clinging to it yet as it fell.
With two of the Romans dead, Virbius alone was
left to conquer. Pretending to step aside in fear,
he killed Xanthippus with the sword, Eumachus
with his unbending spear, so that with those two
slain, it became an equal fight. Each warrior now
ran his sword through the other's chest, mutually
ending their conflict, by taking each other's life.
Glorious in death were they, whom loyalty sent
to the shades. The centuries to come will desire
like brothers, their undying honour be recalled
from age to age, if my verse might but possess
the power to outwear time and, known to remote
posterity, Apollo choose not to deny me fame.

BOOK IV:401-416 SCIPIO THE CONSUL RALLIES HIS TROOPS

But Scipio the Consul, while his voice still held,
shouted to halt the men straggling over the plain:
'Where are you off to with those standards? What
fear has robbed you of yourselves? If it seems too
dreadful a fate to man the front rank and challenge
the enemy line, then stand behind me, soldiers,
quell your terror, and consider! These are the sons
of those our fathers conquered. Where do you run?
What hope is there in defeat? Can we seek the Alps?
Consider, Rome herself, of tower-crowned walls,
now stretches out her hands to you in supplication.
I see our parents killed, and our children enslaved,
I see the sacred fires of Vesta quenched with blood.
Keep this evil from us!' Crying out, so, till the thick
dust choked his voice, he seized the reins in his left
hand, the sword in his right, and offering his breast
to the enemy, threatened to use that naked weapon
now on himself, now on those who refused to halt.

BOOK IV:417-444 JUPITER ORDERS MARS TO INTERVENE

Jove, watching the war from the top of Olympus,
was deeply moved by the noble Consul's danger.
He summoned Mars, and spoke to him as follows:
'My son, unless you enter the battle, this, I fear,
will be that great general's last fight. Snatch him
from the field, so ardent that he forgets himself
in the joy of slaughter. Halt that Libyan leader;
who seeks more from this Consul's death, in his
wickedness, than from mounds of other corpses.
Moreover, see his son, that Scipio who already
trusts in his youthful strength in battle, aiming
at deeds beyond his years, and thinks that his
time for martial greatness seems slow to come.
Lead him to his first battle, teach him to dare
such things, let his first act be to save his father.'

So spoke the Sower of all things. Then Mars
summoned his chariot from Thrace, the land
of the Odrysae. He seized the shield that emits
flames of dreadful lightning, donned the helm
too heavy for any other of the gods to wear,
that armour which cost the sweating Cyclopes
much labour, and he brandished aloft the spear
sated with blood in the battle against the Titans.
His chariot spanned the field. With him went
Wrath and the Furies, and innumerable forms
of bloody death, while Bellona took the reins,
urging on his four horses with her dark whip.
A fierce storm rose in the endless sky, veiling
the earth, driving dark masses of stormy cloud.
Italy, the land of Saturn, shook and trembled
at the advent of the god, and Ticinus shrank
away from its banks, at the chariot's thunder,
as that river flowed backwards to its source.

BOOK IV:445-479 SCIPIO THE CONSUL IS SAVED BY HIS SON SCIPIO

The Garamantian spearmen encircled the Roman
general, seeking to grant Hannibal a new prize,
the armour and the bloody head of the Consul.
Scipio, that Consul, aroused by the slaughter,
stood firm, resolved never to bow to Fortune,
violently returning spear for spear, his limbs
drenched with the enemy's blood and his own.
The plume fell from his helm, the Garamantes,
drawing tighter, their weapons closer, until one
launched a missile whose cruel tip pierced him.
When his son saw that weapon now lodged in his
father's body, at once his cheeks ran wet, and he
trembled and grew pale, his cry reaching heaven.
Twice he turned his own right arm against himself,
seeking to die before his father, yet twice Mars
turned his fury against the Carthaginians instead.

The intrepid lad rushed on through missiles and enemies, keeping pace with Mars himself. Now the ranks gave way and a wide passage appeared through the field. Protected by the god's shield, he mowed down the host and, over the armour and the bodies of the dead, he felled the warrior who threw the spear, and many a life he took before his father's eye, in requisite vengeance. Then he swiftly drew the spear from the hard bone, carrying his father off on his shoulders. Astounded at the sight, the warriors lowered their weapons, the fierce Libyans gave ground and the Spaniards everywhere; the noble rescue of his father by such a youth brought wondrous silence to the battlefield. Then Mars addressed him from his high chariot: 'You will raze that citadel of Carthage, and force those Tyrians to make peace. But nothing will surpass this glorious day in all your long life, sweet boy: blessings, o blessings on your divine nature, true scion of Jupiter! Great things are yet to come, but nothing finer can be granted.' Then, as the sun was already quitting earth, Mars took to the cloudy sky, while darkness sent the weary men to the confines of their camps.

BOOK IV:480-497 SEMPRONIUS LONGUS REACHES THE TREBIA

The moon, descending, brought night to an end, as her brother's steeds breathed fire, and bright rays from the eastern waves rose to the heavens. Then the Consul, afraid of the deadly plain with its level ground favourable to the Carthaginians made for Trebia and the hills. Days of vigorous marching followed, while Hannibal, on reaching the River Po's swift course, found the Romans' pontoon bridge shattered, floating in midstream,

its cables cut. While seeking, by obscure paths,
a ford with easy approach on a quiet stretch of
the river, his men swiftly felled the nearby trees,
and built barges to ferry troops over the water.
Behold, the second consul, Sempronius Longus,
a scion of the Gracchi, now arrived, and camped
likewise in close proximity to the Trebia, being
summoned to make the long sea-voyage from
Sicilian Pelorus. This great man's family were
famous for their courage, his many ancestors
being noted for titles won in peace and in war.

BOOK IV:311-323 THE TWO SIDES SEEK ADVANTAGE

After pitching camp, in the fields over the river,
the Carthaginians brooked no delay, encouraged
by success and their leader's taunts of the enemy:
'Has Rome another consul, in reserve, a second
Sicily to fight for her? No, all Latium's strength,
all the scions of Daunus are gathered here. Now,
let Italy's leaders forge a pact with me, and insist
then on their rules and treaties. And you, Scipio,
granted life in the field, unhappy spirit, live on,
grant such glory yet again to your son; and, when
fate summons you, may death in war be forever
denied you. To die in battle is reserved for me!'
So Hannibal cried in fury, then sent, impatiently,
his Massylian light-cavalry close to the enemy
camp, to provoke the Romans to confrontation.
Nor were the latter prepared to owe their safety
to their ramparts, or let the spears strike closed
gates. They emerged, and ignoring the defences,
Sempronius, worthy of the Gracchi, rode ahead.
The breeze shook the horse-hair plume gracing
his Auruncan helm, and the scarlet-cloak, worn
by his sires, flared from his shoulders. Turning
to his men he called them on in a mighty voice,
and wherever the enemy were densely massed

against him, he burst through, and sped across
the plain, as a crashing torrent falls headlong
from the summit of Pindus to the vale below,
tearing away at the mountain with a vast roar,
the fragments rolling down, while the forests,
the wild-beasts, the cattle, are all swept away,
and the water foams loud in the rocky depths.

BOOK IV:525-553 THE ARMIES ENGAGE

Could I employ Homer's glorious voice, or
Phoebus Apollo grant me the power to speak
with a thousand tongues, I could not tell of all
those felled by that great consul's arm, or by
the furious rage of his Carthaginian opponent.
Hannibal killed Murranus, Sempronius slew
Phalantus, men skilled in war and battle of old,
each general fighting in plain sight of his rival.
Murranus came from the wind-swept heights
of Tarracina, you Phalantus from beside those
pure waters of sacred Lake Tritonis. So when
one-eyed Cupencus, who fought well enough
with the sight of the other, saw Sempronius,
resplendent in his consul's cloak, he hurled
his spear boldly, planting it, quivering there,
high in the topmost rim of the consul's shield.
Sempronius, boiling with rage, cried: 'Fool,
forgo the sight that remains in that wild eye,
that shines from your mutilated face,' with
this, he threw his spear with a straight cast,
the tip passing fully through the fated orb.
Nor did Hannibal's right arm achieve less,
killing the wretched Varenus of the white
armour, Varenus who came from Bevagna;
for him were ploughed the rich soils of fertile
Fulginia where, as Clitumnus flows through
the spreading fields, their white bulls water
at its cool streams. But heaven was cruel,

Varenus won no recompense for those noble
victims bred with care for Tarpeian Jupiter.
The Spaniards were quick in attack, more
so the Moors, and Roman javelins matched
African spears in veiling the sky in darkness,
till the level field as far as the Trebia's shore
was masked by falling missiles; the victims,
in that dense mass, denied the space to fall.

BOOK IV:554-572 THE DEATH OF ALLIUS

The hunter Allius, from Arpi in Apulia, rode
the field with his native horse and weapons;
attacking the enemy centre, while hurling his
darts with a true aim. A Samnite bear's-hide
formed his shaggy cuirass, while his helm
was flanked by tusks from a great wild-boar.
He fought as if roaming the coverts in some
distant wood, or driving out the wild beasts
on Mount Garganus; but when Mago saw him,
and fierce Maharbal each at the same moment,
as two bears driven by hunger from opposing
cliffs fall on a bull fearful of twin antagonists,
their rage preventing their sharing the spoils,
so brave Allius was felled by their javelins.
The Moorish yew hissed through his sides,
and the points struck, centrally, in the heart,
such that neither spear could claim his death.
And now the Roman banners were dispersed
over the battlefield, while Hannibal herded
the frightened stragglers, a pitiful sight, to
the Trebia's shore, impelling them onwards,
seeking to drown them in the river's depths.

BOOK IV:573-597 THE ROMANS ARE DRIVEN INTO THE WATER

Then the ill-omened Trebia, obeying Juno's
prayer, began a fresh assault on those weary
Romans, and roused its waters. The banks
collapsed, consuming the fugitives' bodies,
sucking them into a treacherous quagmire,
nor could they fight free in their struggles,
their feet stuck fast in the clinging mud;
the mired depths held them captive, while
the crumbling banks smothered them, or
the uncertain swamp felled them blindly.
One after another, they struggled to mount
the slippery slope, each making his own
way up the insurmountable bank, battling
the crumbling turf, slipping downwards,
to bury himself beneath its ruinous fall.
One, a good swimmer, was time and again
close to safety, struggling with all his might
to reach the top, but just as he emerged from
the water, and grasped the turf at the summit,
a spear was thrown pinning him to the bank.
Another, lacking a weapon, grasped his foe
in his arms, struggling there, till they were
drowned together. Death, in that moment,
showed a thousand faces. Ligus was one
who fell on land; but his head hung over
the river's flow drinking the blood-stained
water in long sobbing gasps; while Irpinus
had almost reached shore from mid-stream,
was shouting for the aid of a friendly hand,
when a horse, maddened by many wounds,
and impelled down the swift current, struck
him hard, and drowned the weary swimmer.

BOOK IV:598-621 FIBRENUS ATTACKS AN ELEPHANT

Disaster was soon piled upon disaster, when
a line of elephants with towers on their backs
were suddenly urged into the waves. For they
drove on headlong into the water, like rocky
masses sliding down a collapsing cliff-side,
raising unanticipated fear, pushing the Trebia
on with their forequarters, bearing down on
the river's foaming flow. Courage is tested by
adversity as, undaunted by the harsh ascent,
virtue climbs through hardship to glory. So
Fibrenus, unprepared to die a death devoid
of fame and honour, cried out: 'Let my death
be seen, O Fate, not hidden beneath the flood.
Let us try whether there is anything on earth
a Roman sword cannot overcome, a Tuscan
spear not pierce.' Then, rising up, he hurled
his cruel shaft, and planted it true in the eye
of one vast beast, so lodging it in the wound.
The monster followed the blow of the spear,
as it entered deep, with a hideous trumpeting,
raised its lacerated and bleeding head, threw
its rider, and turned its back in flight. Then
the Romans, daring to hope they might kill
the beast, attacked with javelins and flights
of arrows, until a wide expanse of its flanks
and shoulders was thick with wounds from
the sharp steel, and many a lance stuck deep
in its back and rump, so that, shaking itself,
a dense thicket of missiles quivered, until
at last when a lengthy effort had exhausted
all their weapons, it fell, its huge carcase
stemming the waters that broke against it.

BOOK IV:622-648 SCIPIO ENTERS THE RIVER

Behold, Scipio the Consul plunges into
the river from the opposite bank, though
his movements are constricted, hampered
by his wound, dealing out death ruthlessly
to innumerable foes. The Trebia was lost
beneath the shields, the helms and bodies
of the fallen, with its stream barely visible.
Scipio felled Mazaeus with a javelin, Gestar
with his sword, then Thelgon of Cyrene;
his ancestors came from the Peloponnese.
Scipio hurled a javelin at him, snatched
from the flow, driving the whole slender
iron point right through his open mouth.
That blow made the teeth rattle within.
Nor did death bring him rest: the Trebia
bearing the bloated corpse to the River Po,
and the River Po to the sea. Thapsus, you
too fell, the grave denied you after death.
What help can it grant you now, that Garden
of the Hesperides, where the nymphs tend
the branches glowing with golden apples?
Now the swollen Trebia rose from its bed,
and drove the water from its depths fiercely
onward, with all its might; the current raged
with sounding whirlpools, and a fresh flood
followed, roaring. When Scipio saw this, his
rage grew fiercer, and he shouted: ‘O Trebia,
you shall pay most dearly, as you deserve, for
this treachery: I shall send your flow, divided,
through the Gallic lands, rob you of the name
of river, block the very springs you rise from;
never to reach the River Po and join its stream.
What sudden madness is this, that renders you,
O unhappy Trebia, a Carthaginian ally now?

BOOK IV:649-666 THE RIVER-GOD REPROACHES HIM

As the Consul spoke these taunts, a wall of rising
water struck him, the arching flood pressing down.
The Consul stood erect to meet the rushing wave,
while countering the swirling flow with his shield.
Behind him, with a roar, foaming water drenched
the tip of his plumed helm. The river-god, drawing
the ground from under his feet, denied him passage
through that flood to find firm footing; grinding
boulders issued their harsh sounds through the air;
waves, stirred to battle by the god, fought fiercely;
and the banks of the river were lost to view. Then
the river-god, head crowned with glaucous weed,
raised his dripping locks and spoke: 'O arrogant
spirit, you threaten further punishment, to end
the very name of Trebia? How many corpses I
already bear, felled by your sword! Choked with
the shields and helms of your victims, I abandon
my true channel. See how my deep pools, dyed
red with blood, flow backwards. Restrain your
right hand, or else attack the neighbouring plain!'

BOOK IV:667-689 VENUS TURNS VULCAN AGAINST THE RIVER

Vulcan was watching from a high hill, hidden in
the depths of a dark cloud, with Venus beside him.
Scipio the Consul, raising his hands to the heavens,
cried: 'Gods of our native land, with whose favour
Dardan Rome is defended, have you saved my life
in the fight but now, only to die such a death as this?
Am I seen as unworthy to forgo my life in battle?
My son, restore me now, to danger and the enemy!
Let me fight and summon such a death as my land
and Gnaeus, my brother, will approve.' Then Venus
sighed, moved by his prayer, and turned the fiery
strength of her invincible spouse against the Trebia.
Flames spread, burning along the banks, consuming

fiercely trees the flood had nourished many a year.
The groves were consumed, and victorious Vulcan
sent crackling fire spreading to the higher stands,
searing the foliage of the alders, pine and fir-trees,
leaving little of the poplars but the trunks, loosing
the birds that nested in the branches to the heavens.
The greedy flames sucked the water from the depths
and drank the river, while the blood on its shores
was dried and caked with the fierce heat. All about,
the rugged ground split and cracked into yawning
chasms, and a depth of ash settled on the river-bed.

BOOK IV:690-703 SCIPIO AND SEMPRONIUS RETREAT

Father Eridanus, god of the river Po, was amazed
when his ever-running tributary ceased to flow,
and the sorrowing chorus of Nymphs filled their
innermost caverns with anguished cries. Three
times he tried to raise his scorched head, three
times Vulcan hurled a firebrand that drove him
beneath the streaming water, as thrice the reeds,
catching fire, left his head bare. At last his voice
was heard pleading, and his prayer was granted,
that the former flow might be retained. Finally,
the Consuls, Scipio and Sempronius, recalled
their weary men from the Trebia to the fortified
heights, while Hannibal paid to the Trebia high
honour, raising altars beside the friendly stream,
unaware of the greater gift the heavens intended,
or the sorrow Lake Trasimene prepared for Italy.

BOOK IV:704-721 GAIUS FLAMINIUS TAKES THE HELM (217BC)

Formerly, Gaius Flaminius had led a Roman army
against the Boii, won an easy triumph and crushed
a fickle tribe lacking in guile. But tackling Hannibal

was a far different matter. Juno now chose Flaminius,
born under an evil star, to lead Rome to deadly defeat,
as the leader of a weary nation, fit for the ruin to come.
On his first day as Consul, he seized the helm of state,
took control of the army; so a landsman, inexperienced
in rough seas and navigation, taking command of some
luckless vessel, does the very work of the gale himself;
the ship is thrown about by every storm, drifting wildly
over the deep, until her captain drives her onto the reef.
Thus the army was hastily equipped, and sent towards
Etruria, where stands Cortona, sacred to Corythus who
founded it long ago, and where colonists from Lydia
once mingled their ancestral blood with that of Italy.

BOOK IV:722-738 JUNO APPEARS TO HANNIBAL

A warning from the gods of this move was not slow
in reaching Hannibal, that he might win greater glory.
All things were subject to sleep, and oblivious to care,
when Juno appeared to him, as the goddess of nearby
Lake Trasimene, the hair on her moist brow crowned
with poplar leaves. She stirred that general's mind
with fresh anxiety, breaking his sleep with a voice
he could not ignore: 'Hannibal, O happy name, yet
cause of tears for Latium, if Fate had rendered you
a Roman, you would have joined the great gods!
Why hold back destiny? No delay! Only briefly
does Fortune favour great deeds. Let the streams
of blood you once vowed, when you swore war
on Rome before your father, flow from Italy's
veins, regale your father's shade with slaughter.
Once secure, pay me the honour that is my due.
For I am Trasimene of shadowy waters, ringed
by high mountains, where men of Tmolus live.'

BOOK IV:739-762 HANNIBAL CROSSES THE APENNINES

Cheered by this prediction, his men delighted
by divine aid, he swiftly led them over the high
Apennines, a mountain range bristling with ice,
lifting pine-clad summits to the sky above their
slippery slopes. Their forests were buried deep
in snow, the white peaks rising to high heaven
from the vast drifts. He ordered them onwards,
thinking his prior glory might be tarnished, even
lost, were any heights to stall him after the Alps.
They climbed the storm-swept passes, and rocky
precipices, but their toils did not end with their
passage, for the plains were flooded, the rivers
swollen with melted snow, the pathless fields
cloaked in slimy mud. And now Hannibal's
uncovered head was buffeted by the savage
winds of this hostile clime, one eye weeping
over his cheeks and lips. He scorned treatment,
thinking the risk to his sight a fair price to pay
for the chance of battle. He cared nothing for
his looks, so long as their march progressed;
was ready to sacrifice even a limb, as the cost
of war, if victory demanded; he counted his
sight sufficient to reach the Capitol as victor,
and strike those Roman enemies near at hand.
After such sufferings in those savage places,
they found the chosen lake, where now, in war
he might fell a host of victims for his lost eye.

BOOK IV:763-807 HANNIBAL'S SON CHOSEN AS VICTIM

Behold, Carthaginian senators came as envoys;
they had good reason for their voyage, and bore
unpleasant news. It was the custom, in the nation
Dido founded when she landed, to offer human
victims to the gods, sacrificing, atrocious to say,

young children on their fiery altars. The lot was
cast, and the tragedy repeated every year, recalling
the offerings to Tauric Diana, in Thoas' kingdom.
Now Hanno, Hannibal's enemy of old, demanded
the general's son as the fated victim chosen by lot,
though the warlike leader's likely wrath struck fear,
with his formidable image there, before their eyes.
Their fears were amplified by Imilce, who tore at
her cheeks and hair, filling the city with sad cries,
and just as a Bacchante, maddened in the triennial
festival in Thrace, courses over the mountain ridge
of Pangaeus, inspired by the god deep in her heart,
so Imilce, on fire, cried aloud, among the women:
'Hark, husband, wherever you are in battle in this
world, bring your standards here; here is an enemy
more dangerous and pressing. Perhaps, even now,
you stand, fearless, beneath the very walls of Rome,
parrying those quivering missiles with your shield,
or waving a deadly torch, firing the Tarpeian shrine.
Yet, in the heart of your native country, your only
son, your first-born child, is seized for sacrifice!
Go on, ravage the homes of Italy with the sword,
and travel paths denied to man! Go, break a pact
witnessed by all the gods! This is the reward you
win from Carthage, such the honour she now pays!
What kind of piety is this that sprinkles the altars
with its blood? Alas, your ignorance of the nature
of the gods is the prime cause of wickedness in
wretched mortals. Oh, go pray for lawful things,
offer incense, forgo your cruel and bloody rites.
Heaven is merciful and kin to man. Be content,
I beg you, with seeing cattle slain before the altar.
Or if it is your wish, and fixed and certain, that
evil is pleasing to the gods, take me who bore him,
fulfil your vows with me! Why take delight then
in robbing our Lydian land of his talents? If my
husband's glorious career had been thus ended
by the fatal lot, long ago, would it not have been
as deep a loss as that battle off the Aegatian isles,

when Punic power was sunk far beneath the sea?'
The Carthaginian senators, caught between fear
of the gods and Hannibal, were induced to caution.
They left it to Hannibal himself, to reject the lot
or pay honour to the gods. Then, Imilce herself
terrified, was almost frantic with fear, dreading
the relentless spirit of her brave-hearted husband.

BOOK IV:808-829 HANNIBAL REJECTS THE SACRIFICE

Hannibal listened closely to the message, replying:
'Carthage, my parent city, how shall I repay you
in full, for your ranking of me as equal to the gods?
What worthy reward might I seek? I shall wage war
night and day; and many a noble victim shall I send
from here to your temples, out of the Roman people.
But my boy shall be spared for war, my heir in arms.
O you, my son, my hope and Carthage's sole saviour
against the Italian menace, remember, oppose Rome
while you live. Advance; the Alps lie open; take on
my labours! Gods of my country, you too I summon,
whose shrines are drenched with blood, who rejoice
in that slaughter, that worship that terrifies women;
turn your joyful looks, your whole hearts, upon me,
for I ready the sacrifice on the greater altars I build.
Now, Mago, secure the opposing mountain ridge,
while you, Choaspes, approach the hills to our left,
and let Sychaeus lead his men through the woods
to the mouth of the gorge, while I swiftly encircle
you, Lake Trasimene with a flying force seeking
victims from this battle to be sacrificed to the gods.
For the clear promise of the lake's deity assures me
of no small victory here, which you senators shall
witness, and then carry the news back to Carthage.'

End of Book IV of the Punica

BOOK V

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BOOK V:1-23 THE ORIGIN OF LAKE TRASIMENE'S NAME

Hannibal's men had seized the Tuscan hills, unseen;
then filled the arc of woodland with hidden troops,
in the dead of night. To the south, spread the vast
extent of lake-waters, akin to a placid sea, covering
a wide area around in deep mud. This lake in ancient
times was subject to Arnus, son of Faunus, and now
in later days preserves the name of Trasimene. Her
father was Tyrrhenus, a Lydian, the pride of Tmolus,
who had formerly led Maeonians far over the waves
to Latium's shores, and given his name to the area;
and he first accustomed men to the trumpet's sound
by putting an end to the battlefield's anxious silence.
Ambitious, he had raised his son for a higher destiny
(you were handsome enough, Trasimene, to compete
with the gods) but the nymph Agylle, eschewing her
maiden shame, seizing him on the shore, dragged him
down to the depths, her young heart, captivated by his
innocent beauty, swiftly inflamed by Venus' arrows.
The Naiads comforted and cherished the lad in their
deep green cave, he trembling at her embrace in that
watery realm. From him, the lake, his marriage gift,
took its name, and its wide waters, privy to all their
wedded joy, still bear that appellation, Trasimene.

BOOK V:24-52 HANNIBAL SETS A TRAP FOR FLAMINIUS

And now the chariot of dewy night neared its dusky
goal, and Aurora, the dawn, the consort of Tithonus,
not yet emerged from her marriage-chamber, stood
shining at the threshold, at a time when the traveller
is less sure day has begun than that night has ended.
Flaminius, the Roman consul, was marching over
the uneven terrain, in advance of his own standards,
his cavalry racing after him, in confusion; his light
infantry not organised in separate companies, foot

and cavalry in a mass, a crowd of camp-followers
filling the air with fateful tumult, useless in war,
accustomed as they were to take flight from battle.
Moreover, the lake itself breathed out dense mist,
a blinding fog, concealing the view on every side,
and a lowering sky, among dark clouds, mourned
in night's black robe. Nor did Hannibal lose his
cunning: his men in hiding, their weapons at rest,
with no attack of his to halt the enemy's advance.
The way was clear, the unguarded shore stretched
ahead, as if in the quietude of peacetime, a shore
from which there would soon be no return, since
the path led into a trap, narrowing tightly as men
entered the gap, thus promising twin fates, there
the hills, here the lake barrier, holding them fast.
Meanwhile, alert on the wooded mountain slopes,
watch was kept for the Roman vanguard, ready
to strike if they took flight. So a sly fisherman,
by a glassy stream, weaves a light open wicker
basket, framing its belly carefully, gradually
tapering it from the middle, narrowing the end,
so the shaped entrance deceives, providing fish
ready access, but then denying them all escape,
so he can draw them, prisoned, from the water.

BOOK V:53-100 CORVINUS ADVISES DELAY

Meanwhile the consul, oblivious, driven on by fate,
ordered the standards to be advanced swiftly, while
the sun's team lifted the fiery chariot from the sea,
scattering light. And now, renewed, little by little
its orb dispelling the mists, dark vapours sinking
into the ground, dissolved by a cloudless radiance.
But then the sacred fowls, the source, by ancient
custom, of the auspices of the people of Latium
when battle looms and they seek the gods' intent
as to its outcome, those birds refused to eat, as if
foreseeing imminent disaster, and fled their food

with flapping wings. The sacrificial bull bellowed
endlessly, hoarsely and mournfully, then, when
the axe was raised high above its neck, it shrank
from the blow, running to escape the altar. Again,
when the eagle-bearers tried to pull the standards
from their mounds of earth, foul blood spouted
in their faces from the broken soil, Mother Earth
herself yielding from out her bloodstained breast,
this dark omen of oncoming slaughter. Moreover,
the Father of the gods, whose thunder shakes land
and sea, seized his lightning bolts from the forge
of the Cyclopes, and hurled them into Trasimene's
Tuscan waters, till the lake, struck by celestial fire,
fumed over wide expanses, flame lighting the water.
Alas for idle warnings, omens that purport, in vain,
to alter fate! Alas for the heavens disputing uselessly
with destiny! And now Corvinus spoke, the famous
orator, that noble name, whose golden helmet bore
Apollo's bird, that raven which commemorated his
ancestor's glorious fight. Inspired by the heavens,
and alarmed by the soldiers' fears, mixing warning
with entreaty, he began: 'By you, the flame from Troy,
by the Tarpeian Rock, by the walls of our dear Rome,
by the fate of our sons dependant now on the outcome
of this battle, we beg you, Consul, yield to the gods;
await the right time for battle. They will grant us
the field and the time for conflict, do not disdain
to simply await the gods' favour. When the hour
shines that will bring blood and disaster to Libya,
these standards will need no force to raise them,
the fowls will delight in eating without fear, then
sacred Earth will cease to vomit blood. Will you
disregard your experience in war, the power that
cruel Fortune holds at this moment? The enemy
are positioned opposite, and front our vanguard,
as the wooded heights threaten to close the trap,
the south can offer us no refuge due to the lake,
the narrow lakeshore provides a constricted path.
If you are pleased to compete in cunning, delay
battle; Gnaeus Servilius will soon be here with

his swift troops, holding equal power with you
as consul, his legions as strong. Guile is needed
in war: a strong right arm earns a man less praise.'

BOOK V:101-129 FLAMINIUS DEFIES THE OMENS

So said Corvinus; and all the officers added words
of entreaty, each man possessed by disparate fears,
praying, now, that the gods might not continue to
oppose Flaminius, now, that Flaminius might not
oppose the gods. This roused the general's wrath
to greater fury and, on hearing that Servilius was
near, he raged: 'Did you not see me rush to meet
the Boii in battle, when that fearful horde brought
us so much peril, the Tarpeian Rock almost under
siege again? How many enemies then, how many
bodies I laid low born by Earth in anger, whom
a single wound could not kill! Their huge limbs
were scattered over the plain, while their mighty
bones still speck the ground. Is Servilius, arriving
belatedly to claim a share in my glorious deeds?
The gods give warning? Never imagine the gods
are like yourselves, trembling at the trumpet call.
The sword is augur enough against this enemy,
and the work of a Roman right arm fine enough
auspices for a Roman soldier. Is this your wish,
Corvinus, that the consul hide behind a rampart
and do nothing? Shall this Hannibal now occupy
Arezzo's high walls, next raze Cortona's citadel,
head for Clusium, then at the last make his way
unharmed to the walls of Rome? Idle superstition
is unbecoming in an army; courage the only deity
planted in the warrior's heart. Ranks of the dead
surround me in the dark of night, their unburied
bodies rolled, in Trebia's stream, to the River Po.'

BOOK V:130-164 HE READIES HIMSELF FOR BATTLE

No more delay. Surrounded by his officers, beside
the standards, inexorable, he donned his armour for
the last time. His strong helm was made of bronze,
covered in a tawny walrus pelt, above a triple crest
of Suevi-hair, hanging down like a flowing mane,
on its summit Scylla, flailing a heavy broken oar,
her savage canine jaws gaping wide. It was that
famous indestructible trophy that Flaminius had
taken for his own, after he overcame and killed
Gargenus, King of the Boii, and which he now
wore proudly in every battle. Then he donned his
breastplate; its chain links were embossed with
plates of tough steel ornamented with gold. Now
he took up his shield, once dyed by slaughtered
Celts, stained with their blood; a she-wolf was
shown there in a moist cave, licking a child's
limbs as though he were her cub, suckling that
mighty scion of Assaracus, Romulus, destined
for the heavens. Finally, he buckled his sword
at his side, and seized a spear in his right hand.
His war-horse stood nearby, champing proudly
at the bit, its back clothed in a Caucasian tiger's
striped skin. Mounting, he rode from company
to company, in that narrow space, filling it with
his exhortations: 'Yours is the task, yours will
be the honour of carrying Hannibal's head on
a pike through the streets of Rome, for your
sires to see. That one head will be enough
for all. Let each recall the sorrows that urge
him on: a brother, alas, my brother, dead on
Ticinus' shore, or a son, my son, unburied,
sounding the depths of the River Po. Let each
remind himself; but if any be free of the wrath
roused by private sadness, let him be stirred
by public grief, let these things sting his heart
to anger: the Alps overpassed, and Saguntum's

dreadful fate, and the near approach by those
forbidden to cross the Ebro, to the very Tiber
itself. For while you hold back, delayed by
the augurs, by soothsayers idly examining
the victims' entrails, it simply remains for
Hannibal to pitch camp on the Tarpeian Rock!'

BOOK V:165-200 HANNIBAL SPRINGS THE TRAP

So Flaminius ranted, and recognising a warrior
in the ranks donning a black helm, cried out:
'Orfitus, it is for you to contend for this prize,
namely who shall bear the most welcome gift,
the spoils of honour that will hang aloft from
a blood-stained litter, to Jove. For why should
another right arm win such glory?' He rode on,
and hearing a familiar voice in the line, called:
'Murranus, you raise the war-cry, and already
I see you raging as you slaughter the enemy.
What glory awaits you! I pray you, use your
sword to set us free from this narrow prison.'
Aequanus was the next he knew, a priest from
Mount Soracte, outstanding in stature and arms,
whose task in his native land was, with delight,
to carry the offerings three times over hot ashes
unharmed, at that time when Apollo, defender
of his mother, takes pleasure in that blazing fire.
'Aequanus,' he shouted, 'rouse a wrath worthy
of your wounds and deeds so you may always
tread the god's coals unhurt, and as victor over
the flames, carry his offering to smiling Apollo.
With you beside me amidst the killing, I would
not hesitate to pierce the centre of that phalanx
of Marmaridae, or the massed Cinyphian cavalry.'
Flaminius refused now to maintain the appeals,
much longer, those speeches delaying the fight,
a fight that the Romans would lament long ages.
The dread trumpets sounded the signal together,

the bugle rent the air with its strident summons.
Alas the sorrow, alas the tears, still not untimely
after so many centuries! I myself shudder, as if
at imminent evil, as Hannibal calls to his men!
They hurtle down now from the concealing hills,
Asturians, Libyans, fierce Balearic sling-men,
hordes of the Macae, Garamantians, Numidians;
and then the Cantabrians, none readier than they,
swords for hire, to wage the war as mercenaries;
the Vascones too, disdaining to wear helmets.
Cliffs here, the lake there and now armed men,
shouting together, hem the Romans in, while
the encircling Carthaginians pass the signal,
from man to man, through all the hills above.

BOOK V:201-219 THE BATTLE OF LAKE TRASIMENE (217BC)

The faces of the gods were averted; they gave
way, reluctantly, to all-powerful Fate; Mars
himself was amazed by that Libyan leader's
good fortune, while Venus wept, all her hair
unloosed, and Apollo, transported to Delos,
soothed his grief there, on the plaintive lyre.
Only Juno remained, seated on an Apennine
peak, her cruel heart awaiting dire slaughter.
First, our men of Picenum, seeing the enemy
flow down like a cloudburst, with Hannibal
at the charge, themselves attacked, roused
to seek payment for their imminent deaths
in harassing their conqueror and, beyond
fear of losing their own lives, send victims
ahead to make atonement to their shades.
As one, they combined to shower a cloud
of javelins onto the Carthaginians, who,
repulsed, lowered their shields weighed
down by the weapons. At this the Libyans
pressed more fiercely, fired by the presence
of their cruel general, exhorting each other
in turn till chest crushed hard against chest.

BOOK V:220-257 LATERANUS AND LENTULUS COMBINE

Bellona herself, goddess of war, roamed
amidst the battle, brandishing her torch,
her fair hair spattered thickly with blood.
A deathly murmur hissed from the dark
breast of the Tartarean deity, while war's
dread trumpet with its mournful music
spurred on maddened minds to the fray.
Roman wrath was fuelled by adversity,
as, disaster looming, the abandonment
of all hope of salvation proved a harsh
incentive to fight fiercely, but the foe
were inspired by the power of the gods
and Victory's smiling aspect, as they
continued to enjoy the fortunes of war.
Carried away by noble love of slaughter,
Lateranus penetrated to the very centre
of the fight, in wielding his right hand.
Lentulus, also, a youth of the same age,
more than eager for battle and bloodshed,
defying fate, though ill-matched amongst
a mass of foes, witnessing the tip of fierce
Bagas' spear hovering about Lateranus'
neck, rushed forward, in quick support.
Lentulus, being the swifter, drove his
spear deep, proving a friend in adversity.
They eagerly joined forces, their brows
shining with equal light, heads held high,
and twin plumes flaring from their helms.
Syrticus, a Carthaginian, forced to confront
these two (for who would have chosen to
meet them in battle unless already doomed,
by the lord of Hades, to Stygian night?)
was rushing down from the heights bearing
a branch broken from an oak and, fiercely
brandishing that weighty knotted bough,
he burned with vain desire to kill the pair.
'Here, O Romans, are no Aegatian Isles,

no shore moved by sudden storms, nor
by conflict, to betray the sailor, decides
the outcome of this battle; you, victors
once at sea, learn how a Libyan warrior
fights on land, and yield to your betters.'
So saying, he pounded Lateranus hard
with the heavy bough, adding abusive
words to his attack. But Lentulus only
ground his teeth with rage, crying out:
'Lake Trasimene shall sooner rise up
and mount these hills than his noble
blood stain that branch.' Crouching
down, he stabbed Syrticus in the gut,
exposed above him by the latter's
violent efforts, such that hot blood
burst darkly from the lungs, flowing
outwards through the gaping belly.

BOOK V:258-286 THE CONFLICT RAGES

The same frenzy gripped other quarters
of the battlefield, their weapons raised
in mutual deadliness. So the tall Iertes
slew Nerius, while noble Volunx, rich
in land, was felled by Rullus. What use
to Volunx now were his mass of hidden
treasure, or his regal mansion gleaming
with ivory, or sole possession of whole
villages? What pleasure lay in his gains,
that desire for gold, never extinguished?
He whom Fortune once favoured, a man
to whom she brought heaped-up wealth
and rich gifts, Charon's boat now ferries
naked to Tartarus. Near them was Appius,
a young warrior opening a path with his
sword, seeking glory where great courage
was wanted and none other strong enough.
Atlas confronted him, Atlas from Iberian

shores, distant dweller by the far western
seas in vain, for aiming his spear at Appius'
head only its very tip grazed the flesh, and
tasted that noble blood. Appius thundered
threats, his angry gaze shone with new fire,
he raged, and blazed against all before him,
his wound hidden by his helm, the flowing
blood enhancing his martial figure. Then
indeed you might have found Atlas, his foe,
trying to hide among his comrades, fearful
as a trembling hind pursued by a Hyrcanian
tigress, a dove furling its wings on seeing
a hawk in the air, or a hare plunging into
a thicket on sensing an eagle, wheeling on
outstretched wings through a cloudless sky.
A swift sword-cut slashed open his face, then
Appius, severing the head and quivering hand,
inspired by his success, chased a fresh victim.

BOOK V:287-343 THE DEATH OF APPIUS

Isalcas, from the banks of the Cinyps, carried
a shining axe to war, hoping poor man to win
glory before the eyes of Mago, his prospective
father-in-law, proud of his Sidonian betrothed
and the vain promise of marriage after the war.
Fierce Appius turned his violent rage against
him, rising to his full height aiming his blow
at Isalcas' head, while Isalcas tried to aim his
heavy axe at Appius' brow. The more fragile
sword shattered against the Cinyphian helm,
so fierce the stroke, while Isalcas, equally as
unfortunate, only severed Appius' shield-boss
with a failed blow. Appius, now breathing hard,
swung high a rock he could never have lifted
from the ground were it not for the strength his
wild anger granted, and crushed his enemy as
he fell backwards, ramming the heavy boulder

down onto the shattered bone. Mago, fighting nearby, groaned as he saw him hit the ground, the tears and sighs muffled by his helm as he rushed towards him. That marriage promise, the hopes of a grandchild, stirred his courage, while he advanced, assessing Appius' mighty limbs and his shield; and a closer look at that light that flashed from the surface of Appius' shining helm, cooled his wrath for a moment. So a lion, after racing down from the wooded heights, crouches on the plain, gathers itself surveying the horns of that fierce bull nearby, despite the pangs of hunger driving him on: and the lion stares at the ripple of that mighty neck, considers the hostile eyes beneath that shaggy brow, watches the bull's readiness for action, as it paws the dust, meditating battle. Now Appius was first to brandish his spear, and speak thus; 'If you hold true, then never break the pledge you made, a father-in-law should keep his son-in-law company.' Then, swiftly piercing through shield and armour, his spear stuck fast in Mago's left shoulder. The Carthaginian made no reply, but angrily levelled his weapon, a notable gift from his mighty brother, for Hannibal seized it from Durius whom he overcame and killed below Saguntum's wall, giving it then to his brother, Mago, to carry in battle, as token of a famous fight. Anger adding to his strength, the huge weapon pierced both Appius' helm and face, dealing a lethal blow, while bloodless hands clutched at the wound, as if to grasp the blade. Appius, noble name, lay dead on the Tuscan field, and a vital part of Italy fell with him. The lake quivered, and Trasimene withdrew its retreating waters from the corpse; while the dying man's blood-filled mouth closed on the weapon, murmuring as it bit the blade. Nor did Mamercus fare better, wounded by

every foe, pierced in every limb: for he had
slain a standard-bearer, seized the heavy pole,
and borne it deep into the enemy ranks where
a fierce company of Portuguese were fighting,
and was rallying the wavering Roman eagles,
when those Lusitanians, driven to fury by his
daring actions, hurled every missile they had,
or could snatch from that ground covered so
densely with spears they could scarcely move,
at this doomed warrior, most finding nowhere
to pierce his body, his very bones were riddled.

BOOK V:344-375 SYNHALUS THE HEALER ATTENDS MAGO

Meanwhile Hannibal swiftly approached, roused
to anger by his brother's wound. Seeing the blood
he sought to know from Mago and his followers
whether the spear had struck deep with full force.
Hearing good news, that the risk of Mago dying
was remote, protecting him with his shield, he
hurried him from the field, lodging him in camp
safe from the turmoil of battle. He then quickly
called upon the arts of the old healer Synhalus,
who surpassed all other men in treating a wound
with concoctions of herbs, or extracting a blade
from the flesh by incantation, or sending snakes
to sleep by stroking them; thus his name was
famous throughout the Libyan cities and along
the shores of Egyptian Syrtis. Father Ammon
himself, the god of the Garamantians, had first
taught his ancestor, Synhalus, long ago, how
to alleviate animal bites or grave spear-thrusts,
with his remedies. And his ancestor, in dying,
had revealed that celestial teaching to his son,
who transmitted his father's art to the grandson,
in his honour; now this Synhalus followed in
succession, the great-grandson, no less famous.
He had added to the lore of Ammon by study,
and could point to many a statue of his ancestor,

that ancient follower of Ammon. Now, swiftly,
his soothing hand applied ancestral remedies
and, with his robes tightly girt as is the way,
he gently washed and cleansed the wound, as
Mago, thinking of the death and despoiling
of his enemy, dispelled his brother's anxiety
with these words, making light of his noble
mischance: 'Have no fear, my brother. You
can bring my hurt no better salve than this,
that Appius is dead, sent to the spirits below
by my spear. And should I lose my life that
act alone would prove itself sufficient for me
to follow my enemy, gladly, to the shadows.'

BOOK V:376-400 FLAMINIUS COUNTER-ATTACKS

While the Carthaginian leaders were distracted,
this mishap removing them from the battlefield,
behind their defences, Flaminius, seeing from
a raised mound that Hannibal had left the fight,
and that dark battle-cloud retreating to the rear,
attacked the wavering foe with a chosen force,
both swiftly and furiously, such that the sudden
alarm split their already thinning ranks; then he
called fiercely for a horse, and rushed into battle
in the centre of the valley. Just as when Jove
afflicts the earth with pouring rain and crackling
hail, and stirs now the Alpine heights and now
the Ceraunian summits that touch the heavens
with his lightning bolts, earth, sea, and sky all
tremble together, and Tartarus itself is shaken
by a general commotion, so this sudden storm
with no less unexpected slaughter struck those
startled Carthaginians, cold terror penetrating
to their very bones at the sight of the Consul.
He rode through them, forging a wide passage,
felling the close-packed ranks with his sword.
Their discordant shouts and cries carried war's
madness to the gods above and shook the stars.

So with roaring waves Father Ocean and wild
Tethys strike Gibraltar, that Pillar of Hercules,
driving tumultuous seas into the hollow caves
of the isle until the cliffs moan, and Tartessos,
far off by land, hears the breakers crash against
the rocks, Lixus too, over no small tract of sea.

BOOK V: 401-433 HE KILLS BOGUS AND BAGASUS

Bogus, who hurled the first swift spear against
the Romans beside the ill-omened Ticinus, was
the first to fall to his javelin as it stole silently
through the air, Deceived by false omens read
from the flight of birds, he had thought to live
long and see many descendants, but none can
delay by augury the day the Fates have chosen.
He fell in the battle, and looked to the heavens
with blood-filled eyes, calling on the gods, as
he died, to grant the long years they promised.
Nor was Bagasus allowed to exult and escape
unpunished, who slew Libo before the Consul's
eyes; Libo, honoured by ancestral laurels, in
the full flower of his youth, yet the Massylian
sword severed the head with its downy cheeks,
as Bagasus, that savage warrior, sent the youth
to an early death. Yet, dying, Libo called out
to Flaminius and not in vain; for his enemy's
head was instantly shorn from his shoulders,
neck and all, and now Flaminius delighted in
emulating the victor's cruelty in his like end.
What god, O Muses, could tell of so many
deaths in fitting language? What poet could
forge a lament worthy of such mighty spirits?
Of the youthful warriors vying for a glorious
fate, of those raw deeds done on the threshold
of darkness, the fury in hearts pierced by steel?
One after another fell, in a vast clash of armies,
none free to despoil his foe or think of plunder.

They were driven by love of slaughter, while
Hannibal was detained by his brother's wound,
and Flaminius spread ruin among the dense
ranks with sword and spear, now on horseback,
and now, still conspicuous, fighting fiercely on
foot, in advance of the eagles, and the banners.
The accursed valley ran with rivers of blood,
and the slopes, and the hollow cliffs, echoed
to the clash of armour, the snorting of horses.

BOOK V: 434-456 THE DEATH OF OTHRYS

Othrys of Marmorica scattered the field, he
who brought superhuman strength to this
battle, causing the Romans to turn in flight
at the sight of his huge frame. Towering
above both armies, his gigantic head rose
on broad shoulders, his gaping mouth was
hidden by the shaggy locks hanging down
over his grim brow and a beard rivalling
those locks, while his hairy chest bristled
like to some creature's rough matted hide.
None dared to challenge him or fight him
face to face; he was attacked, like a creature
on the open plain, from a safe distance, by
hostile spears. Finally, as shouting loudly
he charged with furious face at the backs
of some stragglers, a Cretan arrow, flying
silently through the air, pierced one grim
eye and stopped him in his tracks. As he
fled to the lines, Flaminius hurled a spear
at his back, which pierced the ribs, its tip
revealed protruding from the shaggy breast.
He now tried to extract it, where the point
of the bright steel showed, until in losing
much blood he fell prone in death, hiding
the blade, and a wide area, with his chest.
His dying breath stirred the dust around,
that blew over the plain, clouding the sky.

BOOK V: 457-474 SYCHAEUS THE DESTROYER

Meanwhile, the fighting was no less fierce
among the wooded hills above, the groves
and slopes wet and slippery from the many
battles over steep ground. Sychaeus brought
death to the fugitives, wrought havoc with
bitter slaughter. His spear struck from far off,
slaying Murranus who in time of peace drew
the sweetest sounds of all from Orpheus' lyre.
He fell amongst the trees, and in dying sought
his native heights, Aequana's vine-clad hills,
and the soft health-giving breezes of Sorrento.
Sychaeus added another victim, to keep him
company, the victor rejoicing in the manner
of death, for Tauranus, among the stragglers,
reaching the wooded heights, leant his back
against an ancient elm-tree to shield himself
from danger, and with his last words called
to his comrades left behind, but Sychaeus
pierced him with a spear that, transfixing
his body, plunged into the trunk behind.

BOOK V: 475-509 THE OAK TREE

What possessed you? Was it divine wrath,
or fatal panic, O warriors, that gripped you,
foregoing war, seeking refuge in the trees?
Fear is indeed a sorry counsellor in danger;
the dire outcome proves that panic delivers
ill advice. An ancient oak there lifted its tall
branches to the sky, raising a shadowy crown
high over the woodland, wide as a full grove
had it grown on the open plain, and covering
a broad space with its dark and leafy boughs.
A second oak as large beside it, had laboured
for centuries to reach the sky with hoary head,
its spreading trunk topped with a green dome,

a mass of foliage overshadowing the heights.
Here you fled, men of Enna, whom the king
of Syracuse had sent from the Sicilian shores,
not knowing how to preserve honour in death,
your minds gripped by extreme terror, and you
climbed high, your shifting weight bending
the swaying branches. Then, one clambering
after another to find safety, some fell to earth
(deceived by the treacherous oak, its rotten
boughs decayed with age) while others hung
high in the summit, terrified by the missiles.
Sychaeus, eager to bring them all to the same
ruin, changed weapons, caught up his bronze
battle-axe, setting aside his shield and, with
his allies lending a hand, the tree succumbed
to heavy blows, groaning and crashing down.
The unhappy victims tossed to and fro, while
the trunk was pounded, as a bird and its nest
are thrown about when a westerly gale rocks
ancient glades, scarcely clinging to the top
of the swaying foliage. At last the wretched
tree, a sorry refuge in distress, fell to a host
of axe-blows, crushing limbs in its wide fall.

BOOK V: 510-529 THE DEATH OF SYCHAEUS

Now another face of death appeared. The oak
nearby, taking fire, was soon wrapped in flame.
Then, blowing heat, Vulcan wove fiery tongues
amongst the leaves, fierce eddies gliding across
the dry timber, scorching the topmost branches.
Meanwhile the missiles flew ceaselessly while,
grasping at blazing boughs, half-scorched men
fell moaning to the ground. Behold, Flaminius
appeared, wrathful, intending Sychaeus' demise,
though the latter, fearing the risk of such a duel,
was the first to try the outcome with his javelin,
but the weapon struck the middle of the shield

lightly at the edge of its bronze spike, and was
prevented from piercing the frame. The Consul,
however, was not willing to trust in his spear
to win the desired result, and stabbed Sychaeus
deeply with his sword, past the rawhide shield.
His enemy fell, his blood-filled mouth biting
the dust as he died. Then, as the Stygian cold
spread through his body, he felt death gripping
his viscera, and his eyes closed in the long sleep.

BOOK V: 530-550 HANNIBAL AND MAGO RE-ENTER THE FRAY

While the battle progressed, with varying fortune,
not unmixed with tragedy, Hannibal and Mago
left their camp, advancing swiftly, banners flying,
eager to regain lost time in bloodshed and killing.
On came their troops, raising a dark cloud of dust,
the plain alive with whirling sand and, wherever
Hannibal forged his way, the surging gale, driven
by that tempest, blew around and clothed the high
hills in darkness. Fontanus fell, pierced in the thigh,
Buta, the minstrel, in his throat and the spear-point
emerged over his back; the former of rich ancestry
sadly mourned by his native Fregellae, the latter by
Anagni; and you, Laevinus, found no better a fate,
though less bold; not daring to challenge Hannibal,
choosing to fight Ithemon, captain of the Autololes,
considering him your equal; while despoiling him,
having brought him to his knees, the heavy ashen
spear shattered your ribs with its inexorable force,
and you fell instantly, your legs collapsing with
the blow, over the body of your prostrate enemy.

BOOK V: 551-583 HANNIBAL RAGES OVER THE BATTLEFIELD

The thousand men from Teano were not lacking
in bravery, led by Viriasius, who was unrivalled

in siting a camp, building a raft, attacking walls with battering ram or planting gangways swiftly against a tower. Hannibal saw him exulting in his fierce skill (Arauricus, wounded, mistrustful of his light armour, had fled in haste before him) and his ardour was kindled, scenting the honour of the fight, thinking this fierce warrior worthy of hand to hand combat. As Viriasius drew his spear from his victim's body, Hannibal attacked and stabbed him in the chest, crying: 'Whoever you are, you have earned my praise, you deserve to die at no other's hand but mine. Carry the glory of your death to the shades. I would have let you depart alive had you not been born of the Roman people!' Then Hannibal went for Fadus, and old Labicus whom Hamilcar had once fought against in Sicily and made famous by a noteworthy duel. Oblivious to the years, forgetting his age, he came to fight, young in heart, with undiminished ardour, but his feeble blows in war displayed his weakness, as straw crackles uselessly in the fire, blazes forth without strength or effect. On learning the man's name from Hamilcar's armour-bearer, Hannibal shouted out exultantly: 'Pay now for your part in that first war; the famous Hamilcar employs this arm to send you to the shades!' So raising a javelin high as his ear, he hurled it, then ran him through as he writhed in pain. The blade being withdrawn, blood stained his grey hairs, while death brought his long service to an end. Herminius too, in his first battle, was killed by Hannibal, Herminius who would plunder Lake Trasimene, floating his line out, over the glassy reaches, to catch the fish to feed his aged father.

BOOK V: 584-602 HANNIBAL LAMENTS SYCHAEUS' DEATH

Meanwhile, the grieving Carthaginians lifted
the dead Sychaeus on his shield and carried it
to the camp. Hannibal on seeing them pass by,
hearing their sad cries, felt a premonition move
his heart, and asked: 'O friends, why such pain,
whom have the angry gods taken from us now?
Can it be you, Sychaeus, burning with the love
of glory, too ardent in your first battle, whom
this dark day of death severs before your time?'
The mourners answering him with their tears,
and naming his killer, Hannibal spoke further:
'Worthy of Carthage, and worthy of Hasdrubal,
you go to the shades; your noble mother will
mourn for you as your ancestors were mourned,
and when Hamilcar, my father, descries you in
the Stygian darkness he will not treat you as
any less than them. But my pain will be eased
by the death of our sorrow's author, Flaminius.
He shall follow you to the grave, and vile Rome
will deeply repent, though all too late, that stroke
of the sword that tore the flesh of dear Sychaeus.'

BOOK V: 603-626 THE EARTHQUAKE

As he spoke, a cloud of vapour issued from his
mouth, and a deep murmur rose from his angry
breast, as boiling water filling a cauldron rages,
and the heated liquid overflows. Then he rushed
headlong into the fray, singling out Flaminius
for a sustained attack; nor was the latter slow
to accept combat. The battle was intensifying,
the pair now face to face on the field, when
suddenly the hills trembled, cliffs rang out,
the summits shook all along the ridge, pines
swayed on the forested slopes, and shattered

boulders plunged towards the armies. There
came a rumbling in the deep, as the caverns
of the earth split apart, showing huge chasms,
while the immense yawning gulfs revealed
the Stygian darkness, and that light they had
once known terrified the spirits in the depths.
Flung from its ancient bed, the dark lake rose
as high as the mountains, bathing the Tuscan
woods with moisture in a manner unknown.
Meanwhile storm and dire catastrophe razed
nations, destroying the cities of mighty kings.
Rivers ran backward violently to their source,
the waves of the sea reversed their path, while
the Apennine Fauns fled the hills for the coast.

BOOK V: 627-643 FLAMINIUS EXHORTS HIS TROOPS

Yet (oh, the frenzy of battle!) the warriors fought
on, and though staggering on the shaking ground,
tumbling down when the earth shifted, they still
hurled their missiles with uncertain aim at the foe.
Driven back at last, the Romans fled randomly
towards the shore and, robbed of purpose, were
pushed into the lake. Flaminius, who had been
parted from them by the earthquake, reached
them now, hurling reproaches at their backs:
'What then, pray, what is left if you retreat?
It is you who are showing Hannibal the road
to Rome, you who allow him fire and sword
to use against the Tarpeian shrine of Jupiter!
Stand, men, and learn from me how to fight,
or if that is denied the brave, learn how to die.
Flaminius shall set posterity no sad example.
No Libyan, no Cantabrian shall ever behold
a consul's back. If such a mad desire for flight
grips you, let mine be the breast that receives
every missile, and my spirit, parting through
the air, still be summoning you back to fight.'

BOOK V: 644-678 ROMAN DEFEAT AND THE DEATH OF FLAMINIUS

So saying, Flaminius rode against the dense ranks
of his enemies; opposing him, Ducarius appeared,
fierce in mind and looks. He was known as a brave
warrior of his tribe, and his savage heart cherished
resentment of old for that rout of his countrymen,
the Boii. On seeing the face of their conqueror,
he shouted: 'Is this the great terror of the Boii?
Let my spear discover whether red blood flows
when such a hero is wounded! You, my friends,
can never repent of offering this victim to our
noble dead: for this is he who rode his chariot
in triumph and herded our fathers to the Capitol.
The hour of vengeance summons him.' Then
the consul was showered with missiles from
every quarter, and overwhelmed as he was, by
that hail of spears through the air, none dare
boast his was the throw that killed Flaminius.
The battle was decided by the general's death;
for the foremost Romans closed ranks, angered
with both the gods and themselves at the fatal
outcome of the battle, thinking it more bitter
than death to witness a Carthaginian victory,
so that soon a pile of their bodies, weapons
gripped in hands red with the blood of defeat,
covered the corpse and the outstretched limbs
of their general, the mass of the fallen burying
the Consul as if forming a funeral mound. Now
the heaps of dead lay scattered there in the water,
throughout the woods, and along the dale deep
with blood, as Hannibal, with his brother beside
him, rode up through the midst of the slaughter,
crying: 'See these wounds, see how they died,
each hand gripping a sword, each soldier in his
armour still pursuing the fight. Let our warriors
witness how they met their end! Their brows
still frown, the wrath engraved on their faces.
And I fear lest a land whose fertile nature it is

to breed such noble men is destined for empire,
and, from defeat itself, may conquer the world.'
Then he yielded to night, as the sun was setting,
and spreading darkness put an end to slaughter.

End of Book V of the Punica

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BOOK VI:1-40 BRUTTIUS HIDES THE EAGLE

Now, on eastern shores, the Sun yoked once more
the team he had loosed in the west off Tartessos
plunging his flames into darkness, and the Seres,
the nation first revealed by sunrise, began again
plucking the cocoons of silk from their branches;
and now the dreadful havoc was visible, clearer
the work of war's insanity: the chaos of horses,
weapons, men, their hands still dipped in their
enemies' wounds. The ground was littered with
shields and crests, headless bodies, and swords
shattered against hard bone, nor could one fail
to see the eyes of the dying seeking light in vain.
Then, the lake itself was foaming blood, floating
dead littering its surface, forever denied a grave.
Yet, in defeat, Roman virtue was not wholly lost.
Bruttius, his wounded body revealing his ill-luck
in the battle, slowly raising his head from a pile
of wretched corpses, his strength often failing,
dragged his scarred limbs through the carnage.
Lacking wealth, noble birth and eloquence, still
his sword was sharp; and none of the Volscians
had ever won greater glory by dying heroically.
He chose, as a beardless lad, to join the army,
had been noticed by fierce Flaminius when he,
finding better fortune, was victor over the Celts
and crushed them. Honoured then, Bruttius had
guarded the sacred eagle in every battle; which
glorious role sealed his fate. Facing certain death,
unable to deny the Carthaginians the eagle and,
seeing destiny was against them and the battle
about to end in utter defeat, sought to bury it,
and entrust it to the earth a while. But feeling
a sudden blow, he covered it with his failing
limbs while he was dying, and so concealed it.
Yet as day returned, from the Stygian darkness
and fitful sleep, he raised himself using a spear

snatched from the nearest corpse and, exerting
all his strength, dug at the earth all drenched in
blood around, which shifted easily, then bowed
to the image of the unfortunate eagle, placed in
the hollow, smoothing the sand over it with his
trembling hands. Then yielding a last weak breath
to the empty air, bore his brave spirit to Tartarus.

BOOK VI:41-61 LAEVINUS GNAWS AT THE DEAD

Close by was seen an infamous show of rage,
that makes a claim on our verse. Laevinus,
from the heights of Priverno, who held the
honourable post of centurion, lay dead across
the corpse of Tyres, a Nasimonian. Retaining
neither sword nor spear, Fate having robbed
Laevinus of weapons in the fight, his wrath
had still found a means of unarmed combat,
since he had bitten his enemy savagely, his
teeth doing the work of steel, to assuage his
anger. Tyres' nose was already ripped, the
eye-sockets torn by the cruel jaws, the ears
had been bitten from his savaged head, the
forehead badly gnawed, while blood flowed
from Laevinus' yawning mouth; nor was he
satisfied until the breath left his gaping lips,
and dark death denied his open maw its fill.
While hideous strength displayed its wonders,
the mass of wounded fugitives were hounded
toward a different fate, slinking away furtively,
by night, on pathless tracks through the dark
woods, and across the empty fields, terrified
by every sound, even a bird stirring a breeze
with its light wings. They were all robbed of
sleep and peace of mind and, panic-stricken,
were driven on now by fierce Mago, now by
Hannibal troubling them with merciless spear.

BOOK VI:62-100 SERRANUS, REGULUS' SON, FINDS REFUGE

Serranus, bearer of a famous name (his father
was Regulus, whose fame ever increases with
the passing centuries, remembered for having
kept his word to the perfidious Carthaginians)
was now in the flower of his youth, and yet,
alas, he had entered the war against Carthage
in the shadow of his father's fate, and now,
badly wounded, sought to return to his dear
home and his unfortunate mother. None of
his comrades remained to ease his grievous
hurt, and under the cloak of night, leaning
on his broken spear, he made his silent way
to Perugia's fields. Weary, he knocked at
a humble door, regardless of his fate, where
one Marus (who had served under Regulus
long ago, Fame hearing of his skill in battle)
was not slow to leave his bed, and appeared,
holding a light, lit at Vesta's humble hearth.
He recognised Serranus, a pitiable sight, as
his failing steps were supported by means
of that shattered weapon, while Marus had
already heard with sorrow of the dire event:
'What evil, I see?' he cried. 'O, I have lived
too long, I was born to too much suffering.
You, Regulus, greatest of men, I have seen
your aspect terrify the citadel of Carthage,
even though you were captive there, your
death a crime bringing shame on Jupiter
himself, such that the razing of Carthage
could never expel the grief from my mind.
Where are you now, yet again, you gods?
Regulus, you offered yourself to the sword,
now a perjured Carthage places the hope
of your house at death's door!' He swiftly
laid the sick man on his bed and, with that
skill in healing he had learnt in war, now
cleansed the wounds with water, and now

soothed them with herbs, bandaging them
gently and wrapping them in wool, to ease
the stiffened limbs. The old man's next care
was to slake the sad victim's dreadful thirst,
and offer a little food to revive his strength.
As soon as this was complete, sleep at last
applied its balm, bringing sweet rest to all
his limbs. And before day dawned, Marus,
forgetting his years, hurried to treat the fever
the wounds produced, in the proven manner,
his anxious loyalty supplying cool dressings.

BOOK VI:101-116 SERRANUS COMPLAINS TO HEAVEN

Serranus, raising his sorrowful face to heaven,
with groans and tears, cried: 'O mighty Jove,
if you have not yet doomed Quirinus' realm,
scorning your Tarpeian heights, then behold
Italy's imminent ruin, along with all things
Roman; turn a merciful eye on our troubles.
We lost the Alpine passes, since then there
has been no limit to our pain: Ticino dark
with our dead and the river Po; you, Trebia,
and grieving Etruria, made famous now by
Punic triumph. Yet why speak of them, for
behold, a heavier weight of evil: I have seen
Trasimene's waves brimming with the dead,
with that sheer mass of corpses; and I have
seen Flaminius falling, amidst the onslaught.
I swear, by the shade of the father I worship,
I sought death then in killing the foe, a death
worthy of his noble suffering, but cruel fate
denied me the soldier's death it denied him.'

BOOK VI:117-139 MARUS TELLS OF REGULUS' GIFTS TO HIM

Meanwhile, as he poured out his complaints,
the old man tried to comfort him: 'Brave lad,
let us bear pain and hard times in your father's
manner. Such things are the will of the gods,
the wheel of fate as it moves on life's steep
path brings us many a dangerous moment;
but yours are the title-deeds of your house,
both great and famous enough throughout
the world: your sacred father, little less than
a deity, gained his high honour by resisting
adversity, and never left the path of virtue
before his spirit unwillingly fled the body.
I had scarcely outgrown my boyhood years
when a first beard showed on Regulus' face.
I became his friend, we spent years together,
until the gods saw fit to extinguish that light
of the Roman people, in whose noble breast
Fidelity assumed her benign place, holding
his heart in her embrace. He granted me this
sword, greatly honouring my valour, as well
as that bridle now black with smoke as you
see, though some glint of silver still appears;
and with those gifts no horseman sat above
Marus. Yet that lance was my greatest glory.
See me pour a libation of wine in its honour,
for it is worth your while to learn the reason.'

BOOK VI:140-204 MARUS AND THE SERPENT

'The turbid course of the Bagradas ploughs
the desert sands in its sluggish passage, no
river of Libya spreading its murky waters
further, or covering the plain more widely.
There, in that savage land, we were pleased
to camp on its shore, needing water, scarce

in that place. Nearby stood a grove of trees, motionless and sunless, dark with Stygian shadow, breathing dense fumes into the air and yielding a foul stench. And within lay a vile den, a hollow beneath the earth, set deep in a winding cave, no light penetrating its gloomy darkness. I recall it with horror. A deadly serpent, spawned by the Earth in anger, lived there; whose like generations of humankind will scarcely see again; this monster, hundreds of feet long, haunted that fateful shore and its infernal grove of trees. It sated its vast maw, and its belly pregnant with venom, on the flesh of lions trapped as they drank the water, or on cattle driven to the river under the burning sun, or birds downed from the sky by a foul corruption of the air. Half-consumed bones covered the ground, ejected in the shadowy cave when it lay replete after dining vilely on the prey it killed. When it chose to bathe in the currents of flowing water, to cool itself when fiery food engendered heat, its head reached one bank before its tail had plunged into the river-bed opposite. Unaware of the danger I approached, and with me were Aquinus, of the Apennines, and Avens, an Umbrian. We planned to examine the grove and explore its peace and quiet. But as we drew nearer a silent dread penetrated our flesh, and a strange chill froze our limbs. Nevertheless we went on, praying to the Nymphs and to the unknown deity of the river, and so, anxious and full of fear, we dared to trust our feet to the sacred grove. Behold, now a Tartarean whirlwind, with a gale stronger than a wild easterly, erupted from the mouth and threshold of the cave. A storm poured

from the vast depths, mixed with the baying
of Cerberus. Struck with fear, we gazed at
one another: the ground rumbled, the earth
was shaken, the cave fell, as if the shades
of the dead were emerging. Huge as those
snakes the Giants were equipped with, when
they stormed the heavens, as the Hydra that
wearied Hercules by Lerna's waters, or as
Juno's dragon that guarded the golden fruit,
as huge it rose from that hole in the ground,
lifted its gleaming head to the sky, sprayed
its venom to the clouds, and fouled heaven
with open jaws. We scattered, tried to raise
a feeble cry, all breathless with terror, yet
in vain, its hissing filled the whole grove.
Then Avens, blind with fear, suddenly hid
in the vast trunk of an ancient oak, hoping
the dreadful monster might not find him,
his action foolish (but Fate gripped him).
Though I could scarcely credit it myself,
it wound its immense coils bodily round
that tree, and plucked it from the ground,
tearing it up by its roots. Then as Avens,
poor trembling wretch, called to us his
friends in a final utterance, the serpent
seized him, its dark throat swallowing
him with a gulp (I looked back), burying
him in its foul gut. And the unfortunate
Aquinas, trusting to the river's current,
and swimming swiftly now as he fled,
was attacked mid-stream, the monster
carrying his body to the bank, and in a
vile form of death, devouring his flesh.'

BOOK VI:205-260 REGULUS ATTACKS THE MONSTER

'So I alone was fated to escape that dread
and deadly monster. I ran as fast as grief

allowed, and explained it all to the general. Regulus groaned aloud, in pity at the cruel death of his men. Then, on fire as ever for war, for battle and conflict with an enemy, and burning with a passion for great deeds, he ordered his men to arm at once, and his cavalry, tested in many a fight, from camp. He himself spurred on his swift war-horse, and a body of shieldsmen followed at his command, dragging heavy siege-catapults, and the falarica, whose huge spike brings down high towers. The thunder of horses' hooves, flying over the grassy plain, now encircled the deadly hollow and the snake, roused by the neighing, slid from its cave and a Stygian blast hissed from its evil mouth. Its eyes flamed with a fatal fire, its crest, erect, towered over the tree-tops, and its triple-forked tongue flickered and vibrated in the air, rising to lick the sky. But, startled when the trumpets sounded, it raised its immense mass from its coiled form, twining its body in writhing loops. Then it hastened to attack, unwinding its tightened circles, now stretching its body to its full length, suddenly reaching out to the warriors' distant faces, the horses, startled by the serpent, snorting, tugging at the rein, their nostrils' breathing fire. High above the terrified men, the snake waved its head on its swelling neck from side to side, now snatching them up in its rage, now eager to crush them beneath its immense weight. Grinding at their bones, swallowing their bloody flesh, yawning jaws drenched in gore, it would relinquish each half-eaten body to find a new enemy. Now men retreated at a signal, while that serpent, victorious, attacked the troubled

squadrons from afar with pestilent breath.
But Regulus, quickly recalled the warriors
to battle, inspiring them with his words:
“Shall men of Italy, retreating before this
serpent, admit that Rome cannot match
such Libyan snakes? If its breath robs you
of all strength, if your courage melts away
at the sight of its open jaws, I will advance
boldly, tackling the monster single-handed.”
So he shouted, unafraid, sending his spear,
like lightening, hurtling through the air. It
sped on, doing its worst with greater effect
due to the fierceness of the creature’s lunge,
its point striking the monster squarely in
the head, lodging there, quivering. A cry
lifted to the heavens, a sudden clamour of
victorious voices rising to the skies above.
And now the earth-born serpent was mad
with rage, impatient of defeat and new to
pain, and feeling the steel for the first time
in all its long years, its swift attack, driven
by torment, might have succeeded had not
Regulus, using all his skill at horsemanship,
wheeled his mount, eluding the threat then,
as the snake flexed its sinuous back so as
to follow the steed in its action, he tugged
with his left hand at the rein, and escaped.’

BOOK VI:261-293 MARUS GAINS THE LANCE AS HIS PRIZE

‘Now, I did not stand there motionless
a spectator of the action. My lance was
the second to transfix that monstrous
body; its triple-forked tongue often
flickering over the rump of Regulus’
tired steed; I threw my spear, swiftly
turning the serpent’s savage assault
against myself. The men followed my

example, vying to hurl their missiles,
shifting the snake's anger from one to
another, until it was halted by a blow
from a siege-catapult. Then at last its
strength was shattered, its damaged
spine no longer able to raise its body
for attack, or lift its head to the sky.
We attacked more fiercely, and soon
a huge spike was lodged deep in that
monstrous gut, swift arrows robbing
the creature of its sight. Now the dark
chasm of that gaping wound emitted
a foul poison from the pierced flesh,
now the tip of the tail was pinned to
the ground with showers of missiles
and heavy pikes; yet still the serpent
threatened feebly with gaping mouth.
At last, with a hissing noise, a bolt
hurled from a siege-engine shattered
its head and the body, stretched far
along the river bank, lay still, a livid
venomous vapour escaping its mouth.
Then a mournful groan erupted from
the flood, spreading through its depths:
on the instant, cave and grove yielded
sounds of tears, echoed by the banks.
Ah, how savage were our losses, how
dearly we had yet to pay for that sorry
fight! How great our suffering, though
what retribution we had yet to witness!
Nor were the prophets of doom silent,
warning that as we had laid impious
hands on the servants of the Naiads,
that sisterhood dwelling in the tepid
Bagradas' waters, trouble for us must
follow. It was then, that your father,
Regulus, gave me his lance, this lance,
in tribute and reward, for dealing that
second blow: this, Serranus, was first
to draw blood from the sacred snake.'

BOOK VI: 294-345 REGULUS CAPTURED IN THE FIRST WAR

Serranus' eyes and face had been wet
with tears for some time, and now he
interrupted to declare: 'If my father had
lived in our day, Trebia's fatal banks
would not have overflowed with blood,
nor your waters, Lake Trasimene, have
swallowed so many famous warriors.'
Old Marus replied: 'The Carthaginians
paid dearly in kind, and he took prior
vengeance for his death. For Africa, her
forces depleted, her treasure diminished,
stretching out her hands in supplication,
was only rescued when warlike Sparta,
sent Xanthippus to Carthage's aid in an
evil hour. The general's appearance was
naught, neither handsome of body nor
noble of brow, yet with meagre stature
went an admirable liveliness in action,
a physical strength to overcome giants.
He would scarcely have yielded to this
Hannibal, now so skilful in his warfare,
in the art of battle, in matching force to
cunning, and in preserving life despite
hardships in a hostile land. Oh, how I
wish that Taygetus, cruel to us, had not
trained him on the shady banks of their
Eurotas! Then would I have seen Dido's
walls sink in flames, or not have grieved,
at least, for Regulus' harsh fate, a sorrow
not to be expunged by death or the pyre,
but one I shall bear with me to Tartarus.
Their armies met in the field, battle raged
throughout the land; every mind angered.
There in the midst Regulus did memorable
deeds, cutting a path with his sword, and
rushing into danger, dealing fatal wounds
at a blow; like a southerly gale shrieking

as it sweeps along dark masses of cloud,
the pitch-black sky menacing earth and
sea alike with impending ruin, till every
farmer and herdsman on wooded heights
trembles, every sea-captain furls his sails.
But Xanthippus, the Greek general, wove
deceit; concealing men amongst the rocks,
he suddenly ceased fighting and then beat
a feigned retreat, moving fast, as if in fear,
as a shepherd seeking safety for his flock
lures wolves, into a pit hidden by a fragile
covering of branches, by tethering nearby
a bleating lamb. Regulus was trapped, led
astray by that love of glory that inflames
noble hearts and a fallacious trust placed
in the god of war. He did not look to his
friends or supporting forces following on
behind, still pressing on alone and fired
by a mad desire for conflict, when a host
of Spartans suddenly appeared from their
place of ambush among the rocks, ringed
our general intent on battle, while behind
a savage force of warriors surged around.
O a dire day for Latium, marked in black!
Shame, O Mars, on you, that a man born
to serve you and your city of Rome was
doomed to a captive's sad fate! I indeed
will never cease to mourn. That Carthage
should see you a prisoner, Regulus! That
the heavens thought you, Carthage, worthy
of such a triumph! What punishment do
the Spartans not deserve for such a trick?'

BOOK VI: 346-363 REGULUS IS RELEASED ON OATH

'Now the Carthaginian senate decided that
Regulus should be made to swear an oath,
and be sent as mediator to negotiate peace;

seeking to exchange him for their own men
taken prisoner in the war. So, without delay,
a ship, launched from the yard, was moored
in the waves close to shore, while the crew
felled pines in the woods to fashion fresh
thwarts and shape the oars, swiftly attached
the rigging, and ran canvas up the high mast.
On the prow they fixed a heavy iron anchor
with curved flukes. Cothon, above all, who
was a skilful sailor and the ship's steersman,
inspected the vessel and checked the rudder,
as the triple beak's gleaming bronze shone
over the deep, glittering above the waves.
At the same time, spears and other weapons
were brought on board, with equipment
to be used against the dangers of the sea,
if needed. The coxswain stood amidships,
near the stern, to call the oarsmen's strokes,
dictating the rhythm of the oars, so that their
raised blades struck the echoing water in time.'

BOOK VI: 364-402 HE REACHES ITALY

'The crew having done their work, the hour
for departure come, the vessel being armed,
and the wind offshore, all rushed to watch,
women, lads, old men. Through the midst
of the crowd, under hostile eyes, Regulus
was brought, by Fate, for them to gaze on.
His calm brow met their sight, as calm as
when he first led his fleet to Punic shores.
I went with him, he making no objection,
and boarded sadly to share his ill-fortune.
He considered it a greater thing to counter
present evils, squalor, and poor food, and
a hard bed, than to defeat the enemy; nor
thought it nobler to flee adversity warily
than conquer it by enduring. I yet hoped

(though I well knew, had always known,
his fierce integrity) that if we wretches
were allowed to reach the walls of Rome,
see our homes, his heart might be moved
and melted by all your tears. I hid my fears
in my breast, believing that Regulus too
might weep and feel misfortune as we do.
When our vessel glided at last into our
native river, the Tiber, I watched his face,
the eyes that reveal the mind, and fixed
my gaze intently on him. If you can credit
this, my lad, he held the one expression,
amidst a thousand dangers, and in Rome,
and even in cruel Carthage under torture.
They came from every city in Italy to see
him, and when the crowd overflowed the
plain, they thronged the hills nearby, as
those tall banks of the Tiber resounded.
Even the Carthaginian senators with him,
tried to persuade that stern-minded man
to resume the dignity of his native toga,
but he stood there, once more unmoved,
while senators shed tears, while a crowd
of women and youngsters wept in sorrow.
On the river-bank the consul extended his
hand in friendly welcome as Regulus first
set foot on his native soil, but the latter
stepped back, warning the consul not to
sully his high office, but withdraw. Only
the haughty Carthaginians and the ranks
of their Roman captives, surrounded him,
the sight a reproach to heaven and the gods.'

BOOK VI: 403-414 HE RESISTS HIS WIFE'S GRIEF

'Behold, Marcia approached, with his two boys
the pledges of their love, made wretched by the
noble virtue her husband displayed to excess,

her hair disordered, her robes torn in sorrow.
(Do you remember that day, Serranus, or has
it lapsed from memory?) Seeing him there, in
his altered state, wearing those unsightly Punic
clothes, she fell with a loud cry, fainting, her
cold features the colour of death. If the gods
have pity, let them grant you, Carthage, to
witness such suffering wives and mothers.
Regulus addressed me calmly, ordering me
to keep him from the embraces of you two
children and his wife; he showed himself
impervious to grief, never yielding to pain.'

BOOK VI: 415-449 MARCIA, HIS WIFE, COMPLAINS

Serranus gave a groan and, close to tears, said:
'My noble father, no less divine to me than
the god whose shrine is on the Tarpeian Rock,
if filial love grants the right of complaint, why
did you, so harshly, deny my mother and I this
consolation and this glory, to touch your sacred
face and receive the kisses from your lips? Was
it unlawful to clasp your hand in mine? These
present wounds would feel all the lighter had I
been permitted, O my dear father, to carry the
undying memory of your embrace to the grave.
I was but a child, Marus, yet unless my memory
errs his stature was more than human, long grey
hairs straggling from his head veiling the broad
shoulders, while an awesome air of nobility and
a dignity inspiring reverence dwelt in that brow
with its disordered locks. My eyes have never
rested on such a man again.' Here Marus, hoping
to prevent Serranus' efforts from affecting his
wounds adversely, cried: 'Yes, and what when
he passed his own house by, driven to accept
the hospitality of the Carthaginians so inimical
to him? Round his own doors shields were hung,

javelins and chariot trappings, famed trophies
of a great victory adorning a humble house, and
his wife calling from the threshold: “Regulus,
where will you go? Here is no Punic prison you
might shun? This house holds the tokens of our
lawful marriage bed, our household gods guard
a hearth unstained by wrong. I have borne you
(where is the crime in this, I pray?) more than
one child, and the Senate and people all wished
us joy. Look back, here is your own dwelling,
from which as Consul, your shoulders gleaming
in purple robes, you watched the Roman lictors
in procession; from here you marched out to war,
returning often with the victor’s spoils, together
too we saw them being hung about its threshold.
I ask for no embraces, not one token the sacred
torch of marriage grants, but do not pass by your
own house, for your sons’ sake rest here tonight.”’

BOOK VI: 450-465 THE SENATORS RECEIVE HIM

‘While she wept, Regulus, evading her complaints,
shut himself with the Carthaginians in their quarters.
The sun had barely risen over those famous heights
of Mount Oeta in the east, evoking Hercules’ pyre,
when the Consul ordered the Carthaginians to be
summoned. Then we saw Regulus enter the Curia.
He himself reported to me, in a calm voice, all that
debate and his own address to the mournful House.
As he entered, the senators called him with voice
and gesture to assume his previous role and place,
but he refused, declining his former seat of honour.
Nevertheless, they gathered round, vying to grasp
his hand, begging him to restore so great a general
to his country. Let them trade the crowd of Roman
prisoners for him, so he who had worn those chains
in defeat, might with justice fire Carthage’s citadel.’

BOOK VI: 466-496 REGULUS HONOURS THE PROMISE

‘Then he raised his arms and eyes to the heavens:
“O source of justice and rectitude, who governs all,
O Fidelity no less divine to me, and Tyrian Juno,
whom I summoned to witness my promise to return,
if I am to speak words worthy of me, protect these
Roman hearths with my voice, then I must go no
less swiftly to Carthage, and stand by that promise
though knowing, full well, the penalty agreed on.
So cease to honour me to the State’s ruin. These
many years of war have wearied me, and the long
captivity in chains has sapped an old man’s strength.
Regulus is not the man he was, one un-resting from
the hard task of war, you see the bloodless remnants
of a name. Carthage, that home of treachery, knows
what is left of me, would prefer these men, so young
and fierce in battle, rather than accept my aged flesh.
Oppose their cunning, teach a people delighting in
deceit, how little my capture diminishes you, Rome.
Accept no peace that is not imposed in the manner
of our fathers. The Libyans demand, the message
they bid me bring, is that you should treat the war
as a stalemate, sign a pact favouring neither side.
For myself, I would rather visit the Stygian shore,
than witness the Romans striking such a bargain.”’

BOOK VI: 497-520 HE INSISTS ON RETURNING TO CARTHAGE

‘So he spoke, immediately yielding himself again,
to Carthaginian wrath, while the senators accepting
so grave and credible a warning, dismissed the men
of Carthage, who hurried homeward, vexed at their
reception, and issuing threats against their prisoner.
A crowd accompanied the senators, shedding tears
and beating their breasts, the Field of Mars echoing:
ready to recall him, and rescue him by force, filled
as they were by righteous indignation. And when

Marcia saw him hastening to board that ship, she
uttered a dreadful cry of fear, as if at that moment
she was standing by his death-bed, and rushing to
the quay she called aloud: “Take me to share his
punishment and death, you Libyans; and husband
I beg one thing of you, by the children I bore you,
one simple thing alone, let me endure, at your side,
whatever suffering earth, sea, and sky may inflict.
Why flee from my unhappy self as far as Carthage?
I did not send Xanthippus the Spartan into battle,
nor were mine the chains clasped about your neck!
And take the children with me. Our tears perhaps
might turn aside the Carthaginians’ harsh anger;
or if the hostile crowd turns a deaf ear towards us,
then one hour will await you and your dear ones,
or if you are so set on ending your life, let us die
in our native land, companions as one to the end.”
But, as she spoke, the moorings were cast loose,
and the vessel began slowly to move from shore.
Then, indeed his wife, wholly distraught, raised
weary arms towards the water, and wailed aloud:
“Behold a man who boasts of keeping faith with
Libya’s wretched race, with our enemies! But
where now, perfidious one, is the pledge you
gave to me, the wedded loyalty you promised?”
Such were the last words of hers that reached
the ears of her inflexible husband; all the rest
was lost to knowledge amid the splash of oars.’

BOOK VI: 521-551 REGULUS’ DEATH AT CARTHAGE

‘Then we sailed swiftly downriver to the coast,
and sailed out over the deep, cutting the great
waves over the vast expanse of water with our
hollow keel. Fearing a shameful end, I prayed
that violent seas might sink us, a wild easterly
drive us onto the rocks, so as to drown together.
But the gentle breath of mild breezes bore us on

to his torment, yielded us to the ire of Carthage. I, unhappily, saw all, and was sent back to Rome to tell of his punishment, the harsh price of my release. Nor would I, even now, try to describe the Carthaginians' cruelty, they acting like wild beasts, were it not that your father's courage set a nobler example than any man ever witnessed. I am ashamed to add complaint to the suffering, which I saw him endure calmly. You too, dear boy, must never cease to be worthy of so noble a descent, so check your tears should they start. They fixed a wooden frame all round him, one equipped cunningly with dense rows of spikes, designed to give a painful jab from those ranks of projecting metal, such that by that infamy sleep was denied him, his flesh being pierced deeply, on whichever side, in the grip of torpor, he might lean toward, with the passage of time. Refrain from tears, my lad: endurance outdoes any triumph. His glory will live on throughout the ages, as long as chaste Fidelity retains her dwelling place in earth and heaven, as long as virtue's name is given reverence; for the day will come when posterity will be amazed to hear of that fate you, our noble general, took upon yourself so lightly.' So saying, Marus tended the lad's wounds, with sorrowful care.

BOOK VI: 552-573 NEWS OF LAKE TRASIMENE REACHES ROME

Meanwhile, Rumour, her swift wings dyed with blood, wet from the crimson waters of Lake Trasimene, spread true and false news throughout Rome. Terrified, the populace recalled the Allia, the savage Senones, and the prospect of their citadel in enemy hands. Baleful Fear broke free of all restraint, and anxiety added to the chaos. Some rushed

to the walls, where a wild cry was raised,
that the enemy were there, spears, stakes
being hurled towards the imaginary foe.
Women, tearing at their grey hair, swept
with it the pavements of the high temples,
calling to the gods with prayers for their
dear ones, men death had already taken.
Neither day nor night granted rest. People,
loud with grief, lay scattered at the gates,
then followed the long ranks of returnees,
hanging on their words, setting no store
by favourable news, stopping and asking
a second time, or begging for information
with mute look, fearing to hear the answer.
Some weep dumbfounded at a grievous loss,
others fear the speaker's lack of knowledge
or hesitation in replying. But when, as they
neared, survivors were recognised on sight,
their dear ones crowded round solicitous
in their delight, kissing their very wounds
wearying the gods with prayers of thanks.

BOOK VI: 574-592 SERRANUS FINDS HIS MOTHER

There Marus, with laudable care, accompanied
Serranus through the crowd; and now Marcia
ran from the house she had not quit since her
husband's death (for, shunning society, she
had endured life only for her children's sake)
rushing out to mourn as she had done before.
Astounded, suddenly, at recognising Marus
and her son, she cried: 'Noble friend to her
who is ever-faithful, you have brought one
of my dear ones home at least. Is the wound
slight, or did the cruel blade pierce right to
our very being? Whichever it is, thanks be
to you, O gods, as long as Carthage does not
drag him off, in chains, to a repeat of those

pains his father suffered. And you, my son,
how often have I begged you not to wage war
with the impetuous ardour your father showed,
nor be urged to belligerent action by his sorry
sense of honour. I have lived too long, and I
have paid a heavy price for that longevity. I
pray, if you gods have opposed us, spare me,
now.' Meanwhile, as if the dark clouds of
disaster had already dispersed, the senators
discussed how they might yet address their
nation's troubles, each vying to further war,
all fear dispelled by their imminent danger.

BOOK VI: 593-618 JUPITER INTERVENES

Their main task was to appoint some general,
on whom all Rome and the damaged edifice of
the State could rely, given the prospect of ruin.
It was Jove who granted Italy and Roman rule
a reprieve from disaster; for he had seen, from
high on the Alban Mount, Hannibal, swollen
with his success in Tuscany and eager to carry
his victorious banners against the walls of Rome.
Now, shaking his head, he spoke: 'O warrior,
I, Jupiter, will never allow you to pass the gates
of Rome or tread her streets. You may fill those
Tuscan vales with the dead, and swell the rivers
with Roman blood, but I forbid you to approach
the Tarpeian Hill, or aspire to breach the walls.'
Then from his right hand he sent lightning bolts,
four times, illuminating the Tuscan landscape,
cleaving the dark cloud rolling through the air,
forming a rift in the skies above the Punic army.
Nor was he content with deterrence: his divine
power inspired the Romans to set a solid shield
before Romulus' city, granting Fabius Maximus
leadership of their bid for deliverance. Observing
military command pass to that general, Jupiter

reflected: ‘He will never succumb to jealousy,
or the sickening poison of the crowd’s applause;
cunning tricks, or desire for plunder and the rest.
A veteran soldier he will view victory or defeat
with a calm mind, equal to both war and peace.’
So the father of the gods returned to high heaven.

Book VI: 619-652 Quintus Fabius Maximus

This Fabius praised by Jove, cautious in action,
was never surprised in warfare, and how great
was his delight when he brought his soldiers
home with not one missing, no man readier
to guard them as his own dear sons, or sadder
to see the blood of his comrades shed in battle.
And yet, he ever emerged as victor, drenched
in the enemy’s blood, and returned to Rome
his army intact. He was of noble birth, his
ancestor kin to the gods. For Hercules, long
ago, returning from distant lands, drove his
prize (cattle, wonderful to see, that he had
taken from Geryon, a triple-bodied monster)
to the site where Rome now stands, as, they
say, Evander of Arcadia was building a home
on the Palatine, among the wild thorn-bushes,
he being king of impoverished subjects; and
his daughter, succumbing to the divine guest,
gave life to the first Fabius, a joy born of sin;
so the Arcadian woman’s blood was mingled
with that of the great hero, and she the origin
of a line descended from Hercules. Once, three
hundred Fabii of that house armed themselves
against their enemy; whom this Fabius of ours
surpassed in glory, through caution and delay,
proving a match for Hannibal, oh so mighty!
While Rome prepared for a fresh campaign,
Hannibal, warned by Jove, and abandoning
hope of breaching that city’s walls, headed

for those fields and hills of Umbria, where
Todi clings to the hill's slopes and summit,
and Bevagna, low-lying on the wide plain,
breathes eddying mists, yet nourishes those
bulls for Jupiter's altar. Next he traversed
Picenum's fields, rich in olive-trees, seizing
much plunder, then allowed his wandering
army wherever spoil attracted, until mild
Campania arrested his destructive course,
and took the war to her defenceless breast.

BOOK VI: 653-697 HANNIBAL REACHES LITERNUM

There, in the marsh country, Hannibal visited
the houses and temples of Liternum, viewing
the gleaming frescoes, records of the First War,
fought to the finish by our ancestors, and here
remembered in these paintings on the portico
walls, showing a succession of notable events.
First Regulus, arguing fiercely for war, as he
might not have done had he foreseen his fate.
Next Appius Claudius, the first to declare war
on Carthage in the traditional manner, crowned
here with laurel, leading a well-earned triumph
for his slaughter of their army. Close by rose
a tall column of white marble, decorated with
the prows of ships, trophies of victory at sea,
with Gaius Duilius, first to sink a Carthaginian
fleet, sacrificing and offering the spoils to Mars.
To Gaius were granted nocturnal honours, with
flaming torches and a flute-player attending him
after the banquet, as he returned to his humble
home to the sounds of a joyous tune. Here too,
Hannibal saw the last honours paid at a funeral
for his countryman: Scipio, victor in Sardinia,
was conducting the funeral of a Punic general.
Next Hannibal viewed Roman soldiers routing
scattered ranks on the Libyan coast, Regulus

with gleaming crest at their backs; Autololes,
Moors, Numidians, Ammonians, Garamantes,
all surrendering their weapons and their towns.
Here, Bagrada, slowly flowing over the sandy
plain, foamed with the slime of that serpent,
the monster which fought the fierce squadron,
and waged war on Regulus. Elsewhere, that
Spartan general, Xanthippus, was drowning,
calling to the gods in vain, hurled overboard
by the treacherous crew on Carthage's orders;
paying the penalty at last for you Regulus, by
dying deservedly, in the sea. Two Aegatian
isles had been added, rising amidst the waves,
the wrecks of shattered vessels visible around,
Carthaginian survivors floating on the deep,
while Gaius Lutatius, possessor of the waters,
drove captured ships ashore before the wind.
There too was Hannibal's father, Hamilcar,
chained in a long file of prisoners, such that
the eyes of the crowd turned, in the painted
scene, on himself alone. And there discerned,
was the statue of Peace, those altars profaned
by the swearing of that treaty mocking Jove,
with the Romans dictating terms, the Libyans,
necks bowed, shrinking from bared axe-blades,
holding their arms out, and begging for pardon,
yet swearing to a treaty they would not observe,
Venus, on the heights of Eryx, watching with joy.

BOOK VI: 698-716 HANNIBAL IS ANGERED BY THE PAINTINGS

After surveying all this with an air of hostility
and contempt, Hannibal, deeply angered, cried:
'Carthage will yet depict, upon her walls, action
as great this, the deeds of my right arm. Let us
see the taking of Saguntum, conquered by fire
and sword; and its menfolk killing their own
children; while the conquest of the Alps will

need no small space, Garamantians, Numidians
trampling over the high passes, on horseback.
Add the Ticinus, banks foaming with blood,
the Trebia ours, and Lake Trasimene's shore
piled with the Roman dead. Let them show
Flaminius, a giant in a giant's armour, felled,
and Scipio the consul dripping blood, borne
in retreat to the camp on his son's shoulders.
Show the people those, Carthage, for greater
things will follow. Picture Rome all ablaze,
alight with Libyan fire-brands, and Jupiter
displaced from the Tarpeian Rock. Now, go
you warriors, whose valour will achieve such
deeds for me, go swiftly, and do what is right,
turn these scenes to ashes, wrap them in flames.'

End of Book VI of the Punica

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BOOK VII:1-19 FABIUS MAXIMUS THE DELAYER

Meanwhile Fabius Maximus was the one
source of hope in the State's hour of need.
He hastened to arm deeply-wounded Italy
and her allies, and in ripe old age he faced
the hardships of war, marching now against
the enemy. But his more than human mind
was worth far more than swords and spears
and war-horses: it went forth alone against
the many thousand Carthaginians and their
unbeaten general, all the warriors in arms
of Italy comprised in his sole person. And
but for that old man's semi-divine powers,
and fixed resolve to deny Fortune's favour
to the enemy by delaying, they would have
put an end to the power of Rome forever.
He curbed the bias that the gods showed
to the Carthaginian army, and he brought
the victorious Libyan campaign to a halt;
with his delaying strategy he thwarted a
Hannibal still swollen with his conquest
of the west. Greatest of our generals, who
saved the Trojan realm from falling once
again, defender of a fading Italy, of our
ancestors' mighty actions, of the throne
and riches of Evander, son of Carmentis,
rise, act, raise up your sacred head to the
heavens above your actions earned you!

BOOK VII:20-73 HANNIBAL LEARNS OF FABIUS' QUALITIES

When the new general had been selected,
and new names were promoted, Hannibal,
reflecting that the Romans had not altered
the command so soon without good reason,
was keen to learn of this leader's rank and

reputation; wondering why Fabius was held
to be his equal, appointed as sole remaining
anchor of the storm-blown State, more, was
troubled by the man's age, he being free of
youth's impulsiveness, proof against deceit.
At once, he summoned a prisoner, Cilnius,
questioning him as to the general's ancestry,
his habits and his actions in battle. Born in
Etruscan Arezzo, Cilnius bore a famous name,
but an evil hour had led him to the banks of
the Ticinus and, thrown from his wounded
mount, he had been captured by the Libyans.
He answered boldly, seeking to end his life
and its evils: 'This is no Flaminius you must
deal with, no hot-headed Sempronius, he is
a scion of Hercules, and if fate had made him
one of your own people, Hannibal, Carthage
would have become the ruler of this world.
I will not offer you a long list of his exploits,
one battle should be enough to know the Fabii:
the people of Veii broke the peace, refusing
to accept the rule of Rome, war was raging
close to our city gates, and the consul gave
the call to arms. No levy was enacted, those
scions of Hercules raised a private army, and
marvellous to tell, from that single house,
a patrician force went out to fight, together.
Three hundred leaders rose, and you might
have chosen, confidently, any one of them
to command. Yet (they left to dire omens)
the Accursed Gate gave a menacing groan,
the great altar of divine Hercules moaned.
Their fierce courage in attack ignored the
size of the enemy force, and they killed
more than their number. Whether in close
order or scattered over the uneven ground,
they took their chances, and by their equal
efforts, their equal courage, they deserved
to lead three hundred triumphs to Jupiter's

Tarpeian shrine. Alas, false hope, forgetting
how fleeting, all that is granted the human
heart! That band of heroes, who thought it
shameful if the Fabii went untouched while
a civil war raged, were suddenly surrounded,
killed together, through the gods' jealousy.
But that is no reason Hannibal, to rejoice;
there are plenty left to tackle you and Libya;
one Fabius will equal those three hundred;
such vigour there is in his body, so prudent
his actions, so shrewd his calm and caution.
Though you are of an age when the blood
runs hot, you will be no quicker than Fabius
to spur your war-horse into battle or tear at
the bridle in its mouth.' Hannibal saw from
this that Cilnius was eager for death: 'Fool,'
he cried, 'you seek to rouse my anger in vain,
and escape your prison chains by dying. You
must live. Let him be close-fettered.' So he
spoke, full of his success and heaven's favour.

BOOK VII:74-89 THE ROMANS PRAY TO THE GODS

But the senators and the women of Rome went
to the temples to pray to the gods. With tears in
their eyes and mournful looks, the female band
walked in long procession and dedicated a robe
to Juno, with solemn vows: 'O Queen of Heaven,
we your chaste followers beg you to be with us,
and, all Roman women of noble name, we bring
you, with reverence, this fine gift, woven by our
hands and embroidered with gold thread. Wear
this, goddess, until mothers are less fearful for
their sons. But a host of jewels set in gold shall
adorn your crown if you but drive the African
storm-cloud from our shores.' Also they made
special offerings to Minerva, Apollo, Mars and
above all Venus. Such the reverence for the gods

that appears in the hour of trouble, yet the altars seldom smoke with incense in fortunate times!

BOOK VII:90-130 FABIUS REFUSES BATTLE

While Rome appointed the traditional sacrifices in the temples, Fabius, proceeding quietly, with a military strategy akin to inaction, closed every route to the enemy and ill-fortune. No one was allowed to quit the ranks, teaching that discipline, Rome's crowning glory, that exalts her power to heaven. Hannibal's hopes were high when he saw the first Roman banners clearly reach the heights, revealing a fresh army with its glittering weapons, and, intoxicated by success, it seemed to him that the only obstacle to victory was that the armies had not yet met: 'Forward,' he cried, 'swift now to the gates of Rome and force the ramparts with your bodies. Only the space between keeps this enemy alive. They have summoned the old and idle to battle, shameful opponents: all you see are the remnants, men reckoned useless before. Where is Gracchus now, or those two Scipios, their nation's lightning bolts? Driven from Italy, they never halted in their cowardly flight, until terror led them to the Western Ocean; both now are wandering exiles, hugging the Ebro's banks in dread of my name. My fame increased when Flaminius died, and I rejoiced to add the name of that young warrior to the list of my conquests, while Fabius has few years left for my sword to sever. Still he dares fight! Well, let him dare! I will ensure that he is never seen in arms again.' So Hannibal, shouting, drove his army on with speed, riding ahead, now shaking his fist, now taunting the enemy, hurling a spear before him, triumphantly and rehearsing the impending battle. Thus, Achilles, son of Thetis, on the Trojan plain,

bore the armour Vulcan forged, the whole world
shown on his shield; earth, sky, his mother's sea.
Fabius simply sat and watched this vain display
from the heights of a lofty hill, and by refusing
battle tamed those proud hearts, their menaces
enfeebled by his clever strategy of delaying, as
a shepherd in the dead of night sleeps securely,
his flock penned in a well-fortified fold, while
a savage wolf-pack howls in its rage outside,
mad with hunger, biting at the strong barriers.

BOOK VII:131-161 HANNIBAL RETURNS TO CAMPANIA

Thwarted in his intentions, Hannibal departed,
then marched slowly through Apulia, halting
concealed in some remote valley, hoping to
attack the enemy following on behind, and
draw them into a sudden ambush; or enacting
furtive progress under the cover of shadowing
night, and retreating again as if in panic; then
he tried swiftly abandoning his camp filled
with plunder, in plain sight of the enemy, and,
regardless of the cost, invited them to attack.
So the Maeander wanders as it flows through
Lydia, winding sinuously, returning on itself.
None of his acts were empty of guile; he tried
every trick, his sharp mind varying the method,
as a ray of light reflected from water flickers to
and fro through a room, quivers in its passage,
its point striking among the ceiling's shadows.
Now wild with rage, Hannibal complained in
anger: 'If I had met Fabius at first in this war,
might Trebia, Trasimene be devoid of fame,
Italy free of mourning, Phaethon's river Po
not darkening the sea with its blood-stained
waters? This general has found a new means
of winning, he defers his hand, while we are
weakened by inaction. How often he feigns

a skirmish to reveal our plans and discover
our deception!' So he pondered, sleeplessly,
as the bugle sounded the midnight hour and
the third watch, picked for this unwelcome
duty, roused from sleep to arm themselves.
Hannibal now altered his route, left Apulia
behind, the plunderer returning to Campania,
but on reaching Falernus' fertile fields again,
that rich soil never cheating its cultivators, he
found that fire had destroyed the fruitful scene.

BOOK VII:162-216 THE STORY OF FALERNIAN WINE

Though summoned by my greater theme, I must
not pass over your gift to us, Bacchus, in silence.
I must tell of the god who granted us the divine
drink, so that none have leave to rate their vintage
above that of the nectar-bearing vines of Falernus.
In happier times, the sword being still unknown,
a man named Falernus ploughed the high slopes
of Mount Massicus. The fields as yet were bare,
no vines wove their green shade for the grapes,
nor did men enjoy diluting the juice of Bacchus
with pure spring water with which they slaked
their thirst. But when Bacchus, while travelling,
fortunately found his way to the shores of Calpe
and the setting sun, he deigned to enter Falernus'
cottage, as a guest beneath its humble roof. That
smoke-stained door welcomed him willingly, and
a meal was placed before the hearth, in the simple
manner of that age, the delighted host all unaware
that he entertained a god; but after the fashion of
his forebears he ran about, eager, attentive, taxing
his years. At last the table was set with fresh fruit
in baskets, and produce, dripping dew, which he
quickly culled from his well-watered garden, and
completed the pleasant fare with milk and a comb
of honey, piling bread too, Ceres' gift, on a clean

board no blood had soiled. Then, from each dish
he took a portion in Vesta's honour, throwing his
offering into the heart of the fire. Bacchus, pleased
with the old man's attentiveness, decreed that his
own liquor should not be lacking. Marvellous to
tell, those cups of beech-wood suddenly foamed
with the juice of the grape, the humble milk-pail
poured red wine, and fragrant bunches of sweet
moist grapes dampened the hollow oak bowl.
'Take this as my gift,' Bacchus said, 'still strange
to you but soon to bear afar the name of Falernus
the vine-dresser: the god threw off his disguise,
and ivy crowned his brow, flushed and gleaming,
his hair flowed over his shoulders, a drinking cup
hung from his right hand, as a vine twining down
from his green thyrsus clothed the festive board
with Nysian leaves. Falernus found it difficult
to withstand the happy draught, and when he
had drunk again his stammering tongue and
wayward steps roused the god's mirth. With
splitting head, he tried, though striving with
difficulty to speak intelligibly, to give thanks
worthy of the gift to the god, until in the end
Sleep, that Sleep who ever accompanies you,
Bacchus, closed his reluctant eyes. At dawn,
when the hoofs of Phaethon's team dispelled
the dew, the slopes of Massicus were green
with vines; leaves and grapes in clusters all
shining wondrous in the sunlight. The fame
of those mountain slopes grew so, that from
that time even rich Tmolus, and the Chian
nectar of Ariusia, and Methymna's strong
vintage, yield to the wine-vats of Falernus.
This was the land Hannibal had devastated,
and persecuted in his rage, impatient that
Fabius still thwarted him, that the blood
on his blade had dried. But now a perverse
desire for battle, a reckless over-confidence
overtook the Roman army; the soldiers now
prepared to rush headlong from the heights.

BOOK VII:217-259 FABIUS RESTRAINS HIS TROOPS

Grant fame, Muse, to that man able to subdue
two armies and quench the fury of them both.
Fabius said: 'If the Senate had thought I was
a hot-blooded man of uncertain temper, one
easily moved, I would not have been handed
the reins as a last resort, the war all but lost.
My plan of campaign has long been weighed:
I will work to preserve you, regardless, though
you seek your doom. None will be allowed to
perish through Fabius' doing. If you are tired
of life and desire to be the last of the Romans,
dissatisfied unless, in this time of crisis, you
render some place famous for a fresh disaster,
a resounding defeat, well then we will have to
summon Flaminius from the darkness. For he
would already have rushed to read the auspices,
and signal the attack. Are you blind to danger,
and oncoming fate? One more Punic victory
and the war is over. Stand fast, men, and know
your leader. When the moment favours action,
then match your fighting talk with deeds. It
takes, believe me, no great effort to rush into
battle; when the gates are opened you can all
pour out in an hour: and yet it is a great thing,
only granted to those Jupiter favours as they
go, to return once more. Hannibal follows up
his good fortune and is confident in driving
his vessel on with that following wind. Our
advantage is in delay, till the breeze drops,
its flagging breath deserting his spread sails.
Fortune offers no man her lasting embrace.
How reduced their numbers are and, lacking
a battle, how their reputation is diminished!
Indeed my claims to fame may include him
who not long ago – but better to say no more!
Do you still call for action, battle with a foe?
You gods, may their faith in themselves prove

lasting! But for now, let a greater disaster be
prevented, I pray, and set me down as the one,
the only one, who is opposed to all-out war.'
His words calmed their frenzy, and quelled
the weapons brandished in anger, exactly as
when Neptune, ruler of the seas, raising his
tranquil brow above the storm-driven waves,
sees all the winds and is seen by all, till they
cease in their savagery their fierce howling,
no longer beat the wings at their brows, and
gradually bring peace to the tranquil waters,
till languid waves gleam along silent shores.

BOOK VII:260-281 FABIUS PENS IN THE PUNIC ARMY

Shrewd and watchful, Hannibal, aware of this,
tried to poison men's minds by use of cunning.
Fabius had inherited a small estate, needing no
more than a few ploughmen for its cultivation;
Mount Massicus adding to his vineyard's fame.
Hannibal chose to cause mischief, by sowing
doubt in the Roman camp: he spared the estate
fire and sword, and left the place suspiciously
at peace, suggesting cleverly that the war was
being waged on some private understanding.
Fabius was wise to this, and saw through this
Punic trick to anger him; but lacked the time
amidst swords and bugles to fear the plague
of envy, or fight risky battles just to counter
the bite of false rumour. Then, while Hannibal
shifted about, moving his camp here and there
without result, looking for any chance of battle,
Fabius penned him in, posting cavalry where
the road divided, steep cliffs rising to wooded
ridges: the high hills of Formia behind, while
the marshes of Liternum lay in front, a dismal
tract of flooded land. The ground was useless
for armed men, and trapped by the treacherous

location, famine, which would claim payment
for Saguntum, soon gripped them hard, such
that the Carthaginian army near met its end.

BOOK VII:1-19 FABIUS MAXIMUS THE DELAYER

Sleep had brought peace to all on earth and
over the calm sea, the labour of the day was
done and the world enjoyed that peace which
night grants all mortals. But restless anxiety,
and wakeful fear denied Hannibal the gifts of
soporific darkness. Now, rising from his bed,
he donned the tawny lion-skin which cloaked
him when he lay stretched out on grassy turf.
Then he hurried to his brother Mago's tent,
pitched near his own: a robust soldier too,
his limbs at rest on an ox-hide, as he eased
his weariness away in sleep. Mago's spear
was planted close beside him in the earth,
his dread helmet hung from the tip, while
his breastplate, shield, sword, bow and his
Balearic sling also lay there on the ground.
A select band of warriors, proven in battle,
were about him, while his war-horse, fully
saddled, cropped the grass. His light sleep
now broken by the sound of footsteps, he
woke, crying: 'Ah, my brother,' reaching
for his weapons, 'what waking care denies
your weary limbs rest?' He quickly stood
erect and stamped his foot to summon his
men, stretched on the turf, to military duty.
Hannibal replied: 'Fabius troubles my rest,
Fabius excites my fears; alas this one old
man is an obstacle in my path! See how
a ring of warriors surrounds us, how we
are trapped by Fabius' encircling army.
Since we are indeed in this strait, come,
hear what I have next devised. We have

the cattle we have seized from the fields
in the usual manner of warfare. I shall
command that dry twigs be fastened to
their horns, with bundles of sticks tied
round their brows, so when they are lit
and the heat spreads, the creatures will
run wild, maddened by pain, and then
go scattering fire on the slopes as they
toss their heads. Our strict gaolers will
relax their guard, alarmed at the strange
nature of this terror, fearing the worst
in the darkness. If you agree (and our
danger brooks no delay) let us prepare.'
They both made their way to the camp,
where massive Maraxes lay, his head
resting on his shield, his men and their
horses round him, and the blood-stained
spoils captured in battle, and who, as if
he fought in his dreams, uttered a wild
cry and then felt with an anxious hand
for the weapons on his bed and his fine
sword. Mago dispelled the remains of
that restless slumber with a prod from
the butt-end of his spear: 'Brave captain,
save your nocturnal rage, and postpone
your fight till dawn. Tonight is reserved
for a ruse, a secret flight and safe retreat.
My brother intends us to tie dry branches
to their horns and set the cattle running
through the woods with their load alight,
so the enemy loosens his grasp, and our
army escape from this trap. Let us vanish,
teach Fabius he cannot equal us in cunning'
Maraxes, delighted with this bold idea
hastening to obey, they hurried next to
Acherras' tent, a man who needed little
rest and minimal sleep and never spent
a whole night abed. He was awake now,
attending to his fiery horse, rubbing him

down after exercise, bathing his mouth
chafed by the bit. His men were cleaning
weapons, washing away dried blood from
the blades, and sharpening their swords.
The pair explained what they, the moment,
and the situation needed, ordering Acherras
to go and arrange the matter swiftly. Word
was passed throughout the camp; the men
being told what to do, and then urged to it;
fear gripped the anxious warriors, spurring
them on so they might depart in darkness
and silence, while the shadows were deepest.
The brushwood was suddenly alight, flame
rose high from the horns of the cattle, such
that as the fire spread, and each of the beasts
tossed its head in torment, the flames grew
denser, their erupting tips bursting through
the smoke. The maddened cattle, driven on
by that dark plague, ran panting hard through
the thickets, over the slopes and rocky heights
of the high hills, nostrils blocked with smoke,
and trying in vain to bellow. The destroying
flames ran along the ridges, through valleys,
reflected in the sea offshore. They were like
the veil of stars that the sailor sees, in a clear
night sky, as he ploughs the waves and amid
the waves gazes at the heavens; or like that
multitude of fires the shepherd sees from his
perch on Mount Garganus, when Calabrian
uplands burn black to improve the grazing.

BOOK VII: 367-408 HANNIBAL ESCAPES, FABIUS RETURNS TO ROME

Meanwhile the Roman sentries, then on duty,
were struck with horror at the sight of sudden
flames, shifting about the mountain slopes,
thinking them spread of themselves and not
of human devising, burning unchecked below

the heights. Had they fallen from the sky, the men asked in fear; had the Almighty hurled lightning-bolts with his strong arm; perhaps the earth, distressed, had split apart spewing sulphurous fires from hidden gulfs? They swiftly fled, while the Punic army quickly commandeered the narrow pass, emerging triumphantly into open country. Yet still, Fabius had, by alertness and skilful tactics, succeeded in so far as Hannibal, despite the Trebia and Trasimene, was content to evade Fabius and his Roman force. Indeed, Fabius would have followed in his footsteps with his whole army, had he not been called upon to conduct his family's annual sacrifice to Diana, in Rome. As he left for the city he addressed his young second-in-command, Minucius, who by custom would take over the colours and overall direction of the war, initiating the change with these words and shaping a warning: 'If events have not yet taught you, through my actions, Minucius, to adhere to caution, my words too will fail to lead you on the path of true honour, and guard you from error. You have witnessed Hannibal entrapped. His foot and horse, his serried ranks of men, all were useless. Alone I did it, as I call on you to confirm, nor will I be slow to do the like again. Let me make my offering to the gods, in the usual way. If you but hold back from conflict, I shall enclose him with the mountain heights, or swift-flowing rivers, time and time again. Meanwhile (believe the voice of experience, it will never play you false) when in danger safety lies in setting nothing in motion. Let the multitude feel pride and pleasure, glory indeed, in overcoming the enemy by force; but let Fabius' triumph be to save your lives.

I entrust the army to you intact, unwounded;
hand it back to me unharmed (that will earn
you glory). Now you will see this Libyan
lion assault the ramparts, now he will tempt
you with spoils then retreat, looking back
nurturing anger and guile. Shut the gates
I entreat, and rob him of all hope of battle.
Warning enough, and if my prayers cannot
restrain your spirit, as supreme commander
it is my duty to forbid you to take up arms.'
So he protected the army with admonitions,
relinquishing command, leaving for Rome.

BOOK VII: 409-434 THE CARTHAGINIAN FLEET AT GAETA

Behold, the Carthaginian fleet, blown by
a favourable wind, beaks ploughing the sea
off Formia, in the Bay of Gaeta, and entering
Gaeta's wide-open harbour, churning the sea
to foam with their host of oars. At the sound,
all the Nereids rose together in consternation,
leaving their glassy thrones in the grottos, to
find the shore occupied by our enemy's ships.
Then in great fear and consternation the train
of anxious sea-sisters swam quickly to their
familiar haunt where the Teleboan island of
Capri rises far-off from the waters with its
rocky caverns. Proteus, the shape-changing
seer, hides there in his cavern in those stony
cliffs that repel the foaming waves. He well
knew what had passed and their alarm, but
first eluded them, transforming himself in
various ways, frightening them in the shape
of a black-scaled serpent, with loud hissings,
then changing again to a lion, as he roared.
'Tell me,' he cried, 'why you come here, why
the sudden pallor in your faces? Why would
you seek to know the future?' The eldest born

of those Italian Nymphs, Cymodoce, replied:
'You know, prophet, why we are afraid. Why
does this Carthaginian fleet invade our shores?
Are the gods transferring the Trojan power to
Libya? Will the Tyrians hold these harbours
now? And must we flee our home and dwell
in the westernmost caves of Atlas and Calpe?'

BOOK VII: 435-473 PROTEUS RECALLS THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS

Then the elusive seer began to reveal the future,
beginning by relating things past: 'When Paris,
Laomedon's shepherd son, was seated one day
on Phrygian Mount Ida, piping sweetly to call
his bulls, straying among the pathless thickets,
back to the dew-wet pastures, he was chosen
judge of the beauty contest of the goddesses.
A Cupid, guiding the chariot of his mother
Venus, drawn by her snow-white swans, was
fearful of arriving late for the battle. His tiny
quiver, and his golden bow, glittered at his
shoulder and, showing her a hoard of arrows,
he signed to Venus to quell her anxiety. Then
a second Cupid combed the tresses from her
snow-white brow, while a third looped a belt
round the folds of her purple robe. Then Venus
sighed, these words to her lovely children on
her rosy lips: 'See, behold the day that proves
your devotion to your mother, beyond doubt.
Who would dare believe, on seeing you, that
Venus must contest face and form (what more
must I endure?) If ever I gave you children all
those arrows steeped in poisonous delight, if
Jupiter, your grandfather, who makes the laws
of heaven and earth, must bow to you when
you please, then let me carry back to Cyprus
in triumph the palm of Edom won from this
Minerva, and let Paphos' hundred altars fume

with incense after my conquest of that Juno.'
While Venus Cytherea spoke to her winged
children, the grove echoed to the footsteps
of another goddess; to those of the Warrior
Maid, Minerva, who had laid aside the aegis.
Her hair, the helm concealed, was elegantly
dressed, her grey eyes wore a look of peace,
her divine feet bore her swiftly to the chosen
place. And the daughter of Saturn, Juno, also
entered the trees from the other side, as was
commanded; for though wedded to Jupiter,
her brother, she too must be judged openly
before the Trojan shepherd, on Mount Ida.
Lastly came Venus, shining in her beauty,
with smiling face, and all the grove about,
all the deep caverns in the tree-dark cliffs,
breathed the perfume of the goddess' hair.
The judge could not be still; and his gaze
dropped, dazed by the light of her beauty,
fearful, lest he had betrayed uncertainty.
Yet the defeated goddesses, Minerva and
Juno, brought a fierce army over the sea,
to destroy that Troy and her Trojan judge.'

BOOK VII: 474-503 PROTEUS PROPHESIES

'Then pious Aeneas, suffering much on land
and sea, established the gods of Troy on this
Italian soil. And while whales swim the deep,
while stars shine above, while the sun still
rises in the East, Rome shall rule, and her rule
shall be unending through the ages. But you,
O daughters mine, as the unalterable thread
of Fate unwinds, avoid the ill-omened sands
of Sason Island, to the north in the Adriatic.
For the River Aufidus, swollen with blood,
will pour its crimson tide into those waters;
and on a field, long ago condemned by that

oracle of the gods, the Sibyl, the ghosts of
Apulia shall fight the Romans once again.
Later Punic missiles will strike the walls
of Romulus, and the Metaurus gain fame
for Hasdrubal's utter defeat. Then Scipio,
shall duly avenge the death in Spain of his
father and his uncle, spread fire on Dido's
shores, draw Hannibal away from Italy's
tormented interior, and defeat him in his
own land. Carthage will yield to Scipio,
and Africa add a fresh title to his name.
His grandson, Scipio Aemilianus, shall
end the Third War victorious, and bring
the ashes of razed Carthage to the Capitol.'
While the seer in his cave revealed these
divine secrets, Minucius, the Master of
Horse, and commander of the army, had
forgotten Fabius' warning and advanced
against the enemy. And nor was Hannibal
slow to fuel and encourage this madness:
feigning to retreat now and then, so that,
with minor losses, he might tempt these
Romans to battle. So a fisherman casts his
bait in the pool, and tempts his catch from
the depths and then when he sees the agile
prey closest to the surface, he reels him in,
on his line, dragging him to shore a captive.

BOOK VII: 504-535 DIVIDED COMMAND

Rumour raged that the enemy was routed,
that Hannibal had saved himself by flight;
it promised an end to defeat if the Romans
were allowed to win; but the brave lacked
power, and victory would only be punished,
while Fabius would keep the men in camp
and order their swords sheathed once more,
the army called to account as the soldiers

justified having conquered. So the crowd declared, while Juno even filled the minds of senators with envy, and with desire for popular support. Then they passed a decree hardly to be credited, almost an answer to Hannibal's prayers, soon to be regretted and paid for by the greatest of disasters. They divided the command of the army, Minucius being granted equal authority with Fabius, who regarded their decision without resentment, but was anxious lest the Senate, being ill-advised, pay a heavy price for this serious error. And then, after much consideration, he returned to the field and, dividing the forces with Minucius, set up his banner on a neighbouring ridge, and observed the Roman army from that high lookout point, as much as he did the Punic. Minucius, in his madness, immediately demolished his ramparts, eager to destroy, and at the same time risk utter destruction. Here Fabius, and there Hannibal, saw him leaving camp, and each instantly devised a tactic. The Roman general ordered his men to arm quickly, while keeping back his cavalry in the shelter of his ramparts, while Hannibal threw every man he had into the line, ordering them to advance: 'Seize the chance of battle, men, while Fabius is absent. Behold heaven offers us this chance of fighting on the open plain, so long denied us. Since the way is open, free your swords from long disuse, men, cleanse the rust by sating them in blood!'

BOOK VII: 536-566 FABIUS BOLSTERS THE ATTACK

Fabius the Delayer was pensive, surveying
the plain from his rampart on the heights,
sad that you, Rome, must learn his value
at so high a cost. His son, who served at
his side, commented: 'That foolish man
will receive the punishment he deserves,
who through a vote among the blind has
usurped our sole authority, to this end.
Oh, you stupid Tribes! How slippery
speakers, in the marketplace, endorse
worthless men! How, ignorant of war,
they vote to split the military command
that darkness might follow light! They
will pay a high price for mindless error,
and the insult to my father.' Tears rose
in his eyes and he brandished his spear,
as his father replied: 'Wash those harsh
words away with Punic blood, my son.
Shall I let my countrymen die before
my eyes, and not stir myself? Or allow
Hannibal to conquer, while I look on?
If that were my stance, would not those
who set me on a level with my inferior
be absolved of blame? Be certain of this
my son, and keep these words of your
old father ever engraved on your heart:
it is wrong to rail against your country;
no man can own to a more evil crime
when he descends to the shades below.
So our ancestors taught. How fine and
noble you were Camillus when, driven
from home and banished, you returned
from exile in triumph to the Capitol!
What a host of enemies you killed with
that right hand Rome had so despised!
But for his calm wisdom, Rome, his

refusal to nurse resentment, Aeneas'
people would have changed their seat
of power, and you would not occupy
this first place among the nations. So,
my son, forget this wrath on my behalf.
Let us fight side by side, and bring help.'
Now, the opposing trumpets sounded,
as men ran swiftly to contest the battle.

BOOK VII: 567-597 THE BATTLE OF GERONIUM (217BC)

Fabius was first to unbar the camp gates
and rush into battle. No fiercer are those
winds that wage war against one another,
Thracian Boreas, Africus, with the power
to expose the Syrtes, as, raging stubbornly,
in their mutual war, they divide the waters,
each driving their own spoils to opposite
shores, while the waves sweep to and fro,
breakers thundering, as the tempest howls.
No glory, not Africa conquered, Carthage
in ruins, could ever have conferred a greater
honour on Fabius than he gained from that
wrong perpetrated by envy; for he overcame
every danger at once, his fears, and Hannibal,
envy and resentment, treating ill-fortune and
disfavour as one. When Hannibal saw Fabius
and his men descending from the heights, he
was shaken and, groaning, his ardour and that
hope he held of a crushing victory suddenly
vanished. For he had surrounded Minucius
with dense ranks of soldiers, thinking they
might destroy the Romans with a shower of
missiles on all sides. In his mind, Minucius,
(too embarrassed to seek help from Fabius)
had already crossed the Styx, to the realm
of eternal darkness, when there was Fabius,
flanking the battlefield from either side, his

outer horns enveloping the Carthaginian rear,
and now blockading, from outside, those who
had recently blockaded. Hercules granted him
to seem taller, growing in stature as he fought.
His helmet-plume flickered on high, as some
wondrous gift of strength and energy suddenly
filled his limbs; he hurled missile after missile,
attacking the enemy rear with a host of spears.
So Nestor, King of Pylus, once fought, in his
second age, youth gone, senility not yet here.

BOOK VII: 598-616 FABIUS DOMINATES THE FIELD

Fabius swept on, killing Thuris, Butes, Naris,
Arses and Mahalces, a famous spearman who
sought to oppose him, Garadus, long-haired
Adherbes, and Thulis who towered above all
others, his arms reaching the summit of high
battlements. He slew all these from afar, but
Sapharus and Monaesus with the sword, and
Morinus too as his trumpet's blare aroused
the field, striking a fatal blow to the right side
of the head, a gush of blood pouring out and
entering the instrument from the wound on
the face, expelled, then, by the dying breath.
Idmon a Nasamonian, fell nearby to a spear,
as he slipped on a patch of blood and tried
in vain to regain his footing, Fabius' horse
knocking him to the earth, while Fabius
pinned him to the ground with a vigorous
spear-thrust, leaving the spear in the deadly
wound. Fast in the dust, the spear quivered
to the dying man's movements, and served
as a sign to guard the corpse entrusted to it.

BOOK VII: 617-660 THE DEATHS OF BIBULUS AND CLEADAS

Fabius' noble example inspired his younger
warriors: a Sulla and a Crassus, soon joined
by Furnius, Metellus and a more experienced
man Torquatus, entered the fray, all of them
ready to die as long as Fabius' was watching.
But the unfortunate Bibulus, while stepping
swiftly back to evade a massive rock hurled
at him, stumbled over a heap of Roman dead,
and an iron spear-point sticking from a corpse
pierced his side where the blows had loosed
the clasps of his breastplate, and in falling he
drove the weapon home. Alas for such an end,
spared by Garamantian missiles and also by
the swords of these Marmaridae, only to be
slain by a spent blade, one aimed at another.
He fell dying, a strange pallor marring his
youthful beauty, his shield falling from his
slack grasp, the sleep of darkness in his eyes.
Cleadas, a scion of Cadmus, had enlisted in
Tyrian Sidon, at the request of the daughter
city, and fought, allied to the Carthaginians,
proud of his band of archers from the East.
A host of gems glittered on his golden helm
and collar, like Lucifer, that morning star,
when, fresh from the Ocean waves, he is
lauded by Venus, and outshines the rest.
His robes were purple, purple his horse's
trappings, the clothes of all his company
deep-dyed in the bronze vessels of Sidon.
He now mocked Brutus, who was longing
to meet and fight against a famous name,
Cleadas wheeling his horse all about him
with the lightest of touches, circling now
to right, now left, then firing a swift arrow
over his shoulder, evading direct combat
Persian style. Nor did he fail to wound, for

the sharp arrow lodged, sadly, in the throat
of Brutus' squire, Casca, the point slicing
upwards leaving torn flesh, and driving its
steel into the soft palate. Brutus, anxious
for his comrade's sad plight, no longer tried
to ride down Cleadas, who ranged widely
firing his shafts while still feigning flight,
but launched his swift spear by its thong,
with all the power of the anger in his heart,
so that the dart transfixed Cleadas' front,
where the loose collar exposed the neck.
Cleadas' bent bow slipped from his left
hand after the missile had struck, while
the arrow slipped from his right as he fell.

BOOK VII: 661-704 MARCUS PORCIUS CATO (LATER THE CENSOR)

Now, while the Romans were attacking their
straggling, fleeing foe, with ferocity, Tunger
the Moor, of fearful size, and terrible in arms,
rushed to the attack. Black of skin, his mighty
chariot, and its new manner of striking terror,
was as black as the dusky backs of his horses,
nor had he refrained from adding a tall plume
of the same hue to the crest of his helm, while
the robes he wore were also coloured black.
Dis, the Lord of Eternal Night, drove such
a chariot, all black with that Stygian darkness,
when snatching Proserpine, from Enna, long
ago, he sped away to their deep bridal chamber.
Yet Cato, face still beardless, was undismayed.
This young warrior was the pride of his native
Frascati, that Tusculum which lies on Circe's
heights, and a place once ruled by a grandson
of Laertes, Telegonus. Though seeing the front
line, checked and held, retreating in confusion,
he drove on his nervous mount with iron spur
and freely loosened rein. The horse, refusing,

stood there trembling, terrified by the shadow
though harmless, that Tunger cast. Then Cato,
swiftly dismounting from his tall steed, ran
after the speeding chariot on foot, and sprang
onto it from behind as it flew. The wretched
Moor, dropping reins and whip in an instant,
grew pale at the fearful sword above his head,
losing courage. Then Cato severed that head
from its neck, carrying it off on his spear-point.

BOOK VII: 705-729 FABIUS RESCUES MINUCIUS

Meanwhile, Fabius, exulting in fierce conflict,
burst through a mass of exhausted warriors,
bringing death. Then he saw a pitiable sight,
Minucius, weary, wounded, bleeding heavily,
begging shamefully for death. Fabius shed
tears, then covered the frightened general
with his shield, rousing his own son thus:
'Brave lad, let us erase this stain, and repay
Hannibal for such kindness in sparing our
estate from the flames.' The young warrior,
fired by his wise father's encouragement
drove off the Punic army with the sword,
and cleared the plain, such that Hannibal
withdrew from the field. So a fierce wolf,
urged on by hunger, will snatch a lamb
when the shepherd's back is turned, and
grip the trembling creature firmly in its
jaws; but if the shepherd hears it bleating,
runs in and confronts the wolf, the latter
fears for itself, frees its prey, still alive,
from its jaws, and makes off angrily its
hunger unsatisfied. Only now was that
Stygian darkness with which the Punic
army had enveloped Minucius' lines,
dispelled, leaving them numbed, and
stunned by their good fortune, crying

out that they were not worth saving.
So people buried when a house falls,
blink, fearing to acknowledge the light,
when suddenly set free from darkness.

BOOK VII: 730-750 FABIUS REGAINS AUTHORITY

After all this, Fabius was happy to count
his men, retreat to the heights and secure
the camp. And behold the men who had
been rescued from the very jaws of death
raised a shout to the heavens as they went
and joyfully hailed Fabius from the ranks,
all loudly celebrating him as their pride:
Fabius, their saviour and their father. And,
Minucius, who had not long ago marched
away with half his army, addressed him:
'O revered father, I, recalled to the light
above, must rightly question why our
army was divided between us this way.
Why did you trust me with those forces
that you alone are worthy to command?
Weakened by that gift, we came near ruin,
gazed on the eternal darkness, bloodied.
Men, make haste to return to him, those
eagles and banners that Fabius rescued.
He is our homeland, and the safety of
the walls of Rome rests on his shoulders!
As for you, Hannibal, be done with your
tired deceit and trickery, you must fight
men led by Fabius now, and him alone.'
After he had spoken, a thousand altars
of green turf were raised with speed, an
impressive sight, and no man dared to
touch food or that wine which is Bacchus'
pleasant gift, until he had prayed deeply,
and poured wine on the board to Fabius.

End of Book VII of the Punica

BOOK VIII

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BOOK VIII:1-38 JUNO SUMMONS ANNA AS HER MESSENGER

Fabius first showed the Romans the backs of
the retreating Carthaginians. He alone the army
called their father, he alone Hannibal, in rage
and impatient of delay, regarded as his enemy:
he must wait, seemingly, for Fabius' death for
a chance to fight, summon the Fates as allies
in action; for as long as this old man breathed,
there was no hope of shedding Roman blood.
Moreover a united foe, serving beneath those
standards; the command restored to a single
general, obliging him to struggle again and
yet again with one man, Fabius; all weighed
the more heavily on Hannibal's anxious mind.
Fabius, by cunning and caution, by slowing
the pace of war, had achieved much: above
all in depriving the Punic army of supplies;
and though their battle to the finish still lay
ahead, he was already the master of the foe.
And then the Gauls, vaniloquent and fickle,
spirited at the start but changeable of mind,
were turning their gaze homeward; unused
to waging a war free of slaughter, they now
were worried that their right hands, lacking
opportunity to exercise their spears, were
becoming weak, thus deprived of conflict.
Then Hannibal's problems were increased
by troubles at home, through the jealousy of
fellow-citizens, and by Hanno's opposition
to the campaign; he refusing to allow their
senate to send reinforcements or supplies.
It was Juno, foreseeing Cannae, delighted
by all that was to come, who renewed his
hopes and wild ambitions, despite those
tormenting cares, which led him to fear
the worst. For summoning Anna, nymph
or the Numicius, that river of Laurentum,

she addressed her with a flattering appeal:
Goddess a warrior, a relative of yours, is
in distress, Hannibal, a name that recalls
your kin Belus. Go now, quickly, calm
a sea of troubles, and drive Fabius from
his mind. He alone prevents the Romans
from passing beneath the yoke, but now
he is disengaging from the war, and it is
Varro whom Hannibal must fight, Varro
whom he must meet in battle. So let him
advance his banners, not fail his destiny.
I myself will be there. Let him march now
to Apulia's plain, where the outcome of
Trebia and Trasimene shall be repeated.'

BOOK VIII:39-70 THE TALE OF DIDO'S SISTER

Then that nymph, who lived near a grove
sacred to Aeneas, replied: 'It is right that
I obey your command with no delay, yet
I ask this one thing and this alone, allow
me to keep my former country's favour,
adhere to my solemn pledge to my sister,
Dido, though Anna Perenna's divinity is
honoured in Latium.' The reason for that
lies far back, buried in deep darkness by
the fog of centuries; the reason, that is, as
to why the Italians should have named
a temple for a Phoenician deity, and why
Dido's sister was worshipped in Aeneas'
realm. But I shall retell the legend from
the beginning, narrating the tale within
strict limits, and briefly recall the past.
After Dido was deserted by her Trojan
guest, Aeneas, and all hope abandoned,
in frenzy she rushed to mount that fatal
pyre in the palace depths: then resolved
on death, she seized the deadly sword

given her by that ‘husband’ as he fled.
His hand having been refused in marriage,
Iarbas usurped the throne, as Anna fled
her sister’s still-warm pyre. Who would
help her in her hour of need, when that
King of the Numidians held power far
and wide? Battus then chanced to rule,
and mildly, in Cyrene, being a kindly
man, and ready to shed a tear for any in
distress. Seeing the suppliant, shaken
by the fate of princes, he stretched out
his right hand to her. There she stayed
awhile, till the reapers had harvested
the golden grain twice; then she could
no longer take advantage of Battus’
friendship, since he informed her that
Pygmalion, King of Tyre and Dido’s
hostile brother, was sailing there to
slay her. So she was driven to set out
over the waves, angry with the gods
and with herself at not dying with her
sister. She was hurled about, the sails
in shreds, until at last the deadly storm
wrecked her on the coast of Laurentum.
A stranger to that land, clime and people,
the Phoenician princess was full of fear
finding herself cast up on Italy’s shore.

BOOK VIII:71-103 ANNA MEETS AENEAS AGAIN

Behold, Aeneas, whose face she knew,
now, with his kingdom won, appeared,
godlike Iulus alongside him. She fixed
her eyes on the ground, fearfully, then
knelt before the tearful Iulus, but Aeneas
raised her and led her gently to the palace.
Once his courteous reception had eased
her anxiety, and she felt free of danger,

he asked to hear of Dido's unhappy fate.
Mingling speech with many tears, Anna
began, in gentle words to suit the hour:
'O son of the goddess, my sister's throne
and life were yours alone; so her death and
funeral pyre declare (alas why were they
not also mine!) And when the sight of your
face was no longer hers, she now sat, now
stood, wretched, on the shore. Watching
the wind's course, unhappily, Aeneas, she
called out to you, a piercing cry, begging
you to carry her away on your ship, your
sole companion. Then distressed she hurried
to her chamber, trembled suddenly and stood
there, still, afraid to touch that sacred couch.
Then, distracted, she now clasped the lovely
statue of shining Iulus, then directing all her
thoughts towards you, clung to your image,
complaining to you, hoping for an answer.
Love never abandons hope. Now she left
the palace, returned frenzied to the harbour,
as if some opposing wind might bring you
back. She was even driven, in the perverse,
self-deceiving, fashion of the Massylian
race, to consult the foolish arts of magic.
Alas, the delusions of the holy wizards!
While they summoned the infernal gods,
and promised balms for her strange woes,
(what horror I, deceived, now witnessed!)
she heaped on the fatal pyre each memento
of you, every one of your ill-starred gifts.'

BOOK VIII:104-159 ANNA RECALLS DIDO'S DEATH

Then Aeneas, revisited by love's sweetness,
answered: 'Anna, I swear by this land, whose
name you both heard me often mingle with
our vows, and by the life of gentle Iulus, so

dear to you and to your sister, I left your kingdom with a troubled mind, ever looking back, nor would I have deserted a marriage, had not Mercury, god of Cyllene, sent me aboard with his own hand, with dire threats, driving the fleet to sea on a following wind. But why (alas, my warning comes too late!) why at such a time did you allow her wild unwatched passion, full reign?' Anna, with trembling lips and breathless voice, sobbed in answer: 'I chanced to be preparing fresh offerings to the Dark Lord whom the third realm obeys, and to the partner of his dim chamber, to ease my sister's troubled mind and broken heart, in her state of restlessness: I was bringing black-fleeced sheep, hastening to avert an evil dream. For, in sleep, a dread fear had filled my heart: Sychaeus, her dead husband, his face flushed with pride and joy, thrice claimed Dido, thrice, with a great cry. I drove this from my thoughts, and prayed to the gods to give a favourable turn to this dream when day came, and then I purified myself in the running stream. Dido passed quickly to the shore, kissing the mute sand where you had stood, again and again; then she clasped the earth where your footprints showed, just as a mother claps to her breast the ashes of her lost son. Then, hair unbound, she rushed to a great tall pyre she had already raised, from which the whole city of Carthage was visible, and the sea. And then she donned her Roman robes, and that necklace of pearls; recalling, poor wretch, the memory of the day when she first saw those gifts, and the festive banquet greeting your arrival, at which you told the long tale of Troy's ruin, in its order of events, and she sat late to hear you speak. Now she turned her wild weeping eyes toward

the harbour, crying: “You gods of endless night,
whose power is greater at the hour of our death,
help me, I pray! Welcome, gently, this spirit
love has conquered. Aeneas’ marriage partner,
Venus’ daughter-in-law, I avenged my husband
Sychaeus, saw the towers of my Carthage rise.
Now the shade of a great queen descends to you.
And perhaps that husband, whose love was once
sweet to me, waits there, eager to love as before.”
So saying, she drove the sword deep in her heart,
that sword received as a pledge of Aeneas’ love.
Witnessing this, her servants ran grieving through
the halls beating their breasts. The palace echoed
to their loud cries. Unhappily, I heard the news
and, terrified by that dreadful death, I tore at my
face with my nails, as I ran wildly to the palace,
and laboured to scramble up the massive steps.
Three times I tried to pierce myself with that
accursed sword, three times I fell prostrate on
my dead sister’s corpse. And now the rumour
spread through the neighbouring towns: those
Numidian chieftains, with fierce Iarbas, readied
themselves for war. Then, driven on by destiny,
I came to this city of Cyrene, for the strength of
the waves now carried me here, to your shores.’

BOOK VIII:160-184 DIDO APPEARS TO HER IN DREAM

Aeneas was moved, presenting a gentle stance,
a kindly manner, towards Anna in her troubles.
Soon her grief and sorrow seemed eased, and
she no longer a stranger in that Trojan palace.
When the dark of night had wrapped all things
on earth, and the expanse of calm sea, in silent
sleep, she dreamed that her sister Dido, spoke
to her, with a sad aspect and a sorrowful face:
‘Ah, sister, how can you bear to sleep beneath
this roof so long and so incautiously? Do you

not see the snares laid for you, and the dangers
that surround you? Do you not yet know that
the Trojans bring ruin to our land and nation?
As long as the sky and stars revolve in their
swift course, and the moon reflects the sun's
light to Earth, there can be no lasting peace
between Aeneas' people and those of Tyre.
Rise, and go; already I suspect some secret
act of deceit on the part of his wife, Lavinia,
that she nurtures some dark plot in her heart.
Moreover (for do not think it all sleep's idle
imaginings) not far from here the Numicius
descends from a little spring, and flows with
gentle current through the valley. Sister, you
must make your way to a safe harbour there.
The Nymphs will happily admit you to their
sacred stream, and your divine power will be
honoured, forever, throughout Italian lands.'
So Dido spoke, then vanished into thin air.

BOOK VIII:185-201 ANNA AS THE GODDESS OF THE RIVER NUMICIUS

Terrified by her strange dream, Anna started
from sleep, her whole body drenched in cold
sweat. Then she sprang from her bed, just as
she was, the one thin garment covering her,
and, climbing from the low window sill, ran
swiftly through the open fields, till, they say,
Numicius accepted her to his sandy depths,
and concealed her there in his glassy caves.
The sun had filled the whole world with its
rays, when the Trojans found her missing
from her chamber. They scoured the fields,
calling loudly, then they tracked her clear
trail to the river-bank, marvelling amongst
themselves when the river turned back in its
passage to the sea, and she was seen seated
among her sister Naiads, and spoke to those

followers of Aeneas in kindly speech. Since
that time Anna's festival has been celebrated
at the New Year, and her divinity honoured,
with religious reverence, throughout Italy.

BOOK VIII:202-241 ANNA VISITS HANNIBAL

Once Juno had exhorted her to rouse Hannibal
to battle, bringing sorrow on Italy, she headed
for the heavens in her swift chariot, longing
finally to quench her thirst for Roman blood.
Anna readily obeyed the goddess, and sought
the great leader of the Libyans, seen by none.
He chancing to be absent from company, she
found him pondering the war's uncertainties,
sighing anxiously, but with alert mind. She
soothed his cares with friendly words thus:
'O most powerful ruler of the Phoenicians,
why, sick with anxiety, nurse such troubles?
Now, all the gods' anger towards you has
been placated, all their favour turned once
more towards the descendants of Agenor.
Arouse yourself from idleness and delay,
lead the forces of Marmarica on to battle.
Fresh consuls are appointed: that heroic
scion of Hercules, Fabius, has laid aside
his weapons at the Senate's ill-advised
bidding, and you only have to face one
more Flaminius in battle. Juno, consort
of almighty Jupiter, has sent me to you,
doubt it not. For though I am honoured
as an immortal divinity in Italian lands,
I was born of the line of your ancestor
Belus. Linger not: launch the lightning
bolts of war swiftly, where Garganus
extends its slopes to Apulia's fields:
it is not far, direct your banners there!'
She spoke, and her watery shape rose

to the clouds. Hannibal revived by this promise of honour to come, called after her: ‘Glory of our nation, nymph sacred to me as any goddess, favour us with all success. Grant me a battle, and I will set your statue in a marble shrine high on the citadel of Carthage, and there I will dedicate Dido’s statue with like honour.’ So saying, and swelling with pride, he roused his cheering comrades. ‘Soldiers, Italy’s doom is here, and an end to heavy hearts and the slow torment of inaction: we have placated the gods’ anger; they favour us once more. I tell you, Fabius’ malign power is ended, the rods and axes precede some new consul. Let each of you now renew his oath to me, and make good that promise of valiant deeds sworn when all battle was denied us. Behold, a divinity, native to our country, has pledged a future greater than the past. Raise those banners, follow our goddess, to a field of ill-omen to Trojans, to Arpi, founded by Diomede!’

BOOK VIII:242-277 VARRO ROUSES THE MASSES

Inspired, the Carthaginians made for Arpi, while Varro, empowered by the consul’s purple-bordered toga, appropriated as a gift from the people, ranted from the Rostrum, hastening to open a broad path to ruin, and seal Rome’s fate. Varro’s birth was obscure, and the names of his ancestors went unheard, but his impudent tongue wagged endlessly in eloquent flow. Thus he acquired wealth and was liberal with the spoils, so that by courting the lowest of the low, and exposing the Senate, he rose so high in a city shaken

by war, that he alone dictated the course of
events and became the arbiter of its destiny,
though Italy should have been ashamed to
think its safety might be won by such as he.
Mindless voters had granted that blot on our
register a place among such heroes as Fabius,
the Scipios, both names sacred to Mars, and
Marcellus, who offered an enemy general's
spoils to Jove. The evil of Cannae was due
to bribery, a corrupted vote in the Campus,
a field more fatal to us than that of Diomede.
Despite his perversity as a citizen, skilful at
sowing ill-will, stirring up trouble, Varro was
useless in the field, ignorant of the arts of war,
unknown for any worthwhile actions, yet he
sought to gain military glory through words,
by sounding the war-cry from the Rostrum.
So he quickly declared Fabius to blame for
the delay, as if celebrating his own ovation,
attacking the Senate in a speech to the crowd:
'As consul, I ask of you, who wield supreme
power, directions as to the conduct of the war.
Am I to sit still, or wander about the hills, while
Garamantians and dusky Moors parcel out Italy?
Or am I to use the sword you place in my hands?
Listen, dear Fabius, to what the people of Mars
demand: that the Libyans be expelled and Rome
relieved of her enemy. Is this impatience, when
they have endured so much, and already a third
year burdens them with its suffering and tears?
So rise and arm, citizens: a brief march alone
prevents your victory: and the day that reveals
the enemy to you will end the Senate's reign
and our war with Carthage. Advance with joy;
for I shall lead Hannibal through Rome with
chains around his neck, while Fabius looks on!'

BOOK VIII:278-326 FABIUS OFFERS PAULLUS HIS ADVICE

After this harangue, brushing aside all obstacles,
he swiftly led the army through the gates, like
a clumsy charioteer, not in control of the reins,
who, when the starting-gate is lifted, crouches,
with unstable foothold, and flicks at the horses,
only to be carried along headlong at their mercy:
then the axle smokes with their turn of speed, as
the tangled chariot reins swing wildly to and fro.
Now Aemilius Paullus (who was voted equal
powers as Varro's colleague) saw that the State
was headed for ruin, at the hands of a perverse
consul, yet the crowd's anger is easily roused,
and the scars of their previous disparagement,
scored on his mind, checked the tide of protest
though his heart was troubled; for when consul
in his youth, after victory in Illyricum, envy's
black maw had gaped for him, and spewed its
blast of slander. Hence he was gripped by fear,
bowing before the people's enmity. And yet
he was descended from the gods, related by
his ancestry to those lords of heaven: since
through their founder, one Amulius, he traced
his origins to Assaracus, and thereby to Jove;
nor would any who saw him fight dispute it.
Now as he sought the camp, Fabius addressed
him: 'Though the words are almost torn from
my breast unwillingly, Paullus, you are wrong
if you think Hannibal is the greatest challenge
you face. Conflict and a worse enemy reside
in the Roman camp, or I have learnt nothing
from my long experience of war. I have heard
Varro pledge to battle with Hannibal, war's
favourite, the moment he sees him (alas how
age irks and wearies me, that I might live to
endure the ruin I foresee!) How close we are,
Paullus, to utter destruction, if this consul's
boast reaches Hannibal's eager ear! No doubt

his soldiers are already deployed to oppose us
on the plains, waiting with swords raised for
the next Flaminius! What vast forces you will
rouse (heaven help us) Varro, in your mad rush
to battle! Are you a man determined to examine
the ground before us, or test the enemy's ways?
You, without the foresight to probe their supply
lines, the strength of their positions or manner
of warfare, or guard against chance that weighs
more heavily than any weapon? Paullus, keep
unswervingly to the path of duty; for, if a single
arm may destroy a country, why should a single
arm not preserve it? That wretched Hannibal is
short of food for his men, his allies lack loyalty,
and have lost their battle fervour. No home here
offers him hospitality under a friendly roof, no
loyal city welcomes him within its walls, no
fresh recruits are here to make good his losses.
Barely a third of that force survives who came
from the raw banks of the Ebro. Persevere, use
delay, delight in that recipe for safe attrition.
But if, meanwhile, a favourable breeze arises
and the gods approve, seize the moment swiftly.'

BOOK VIII:327-355 PAULLUS SWEARS TO DO HIS DUTY

Paullus answered him, briefly and sadly, thus:
'The path of virtue will be mine, indeed; while
I will meet the enemy with that spirit that renders
you invincible. Nor will our one recourse, delay,
fail me, which you employed until an enfeebled
Hannibal saw all opportunity for battle crushed.
But why are the gods angered? Carthage, I see,
has been granted the one consul, Italy the other.
Varro carries all with him, as if the idiot fears
lest Rome is ruined first by some other leader.
One of Carthage's senators, summoned as my
colleague, would prove less savage of purpose.

No horse is swift enough to bear that madman
into action; he resents the shadows, when night
falls and hinders his course of action; marches
proudly with half-drawn swords, lest plucking
them from the sheath delays a battle. I swear,
by the Tarpeian Rock, by the temple of that
Jove whose scion I am, and by these walls of
glorious Rome, which, with their citadel, I
leave yet standing, that wherever the safety
of the State summons me I shall go, scorning
danger. And should the army fight, deaf to my
warning, then I shall no longer wait for you,
my sons, the dear descendants of Assaracus,
nor ruined Rome see me return alive like Varro.'
Thus two consuls left to join their two armies,
their minds at cross-purposes, while Hannibal
had already camped, prepared for battle, on
the plains of Arpi, as Anna had advised him.
Never did the land of Italy echo to a greater
mass of men or that force of cavalry in arms.
For the Romans feared the end of their nation
and of Rome, in expectation of one final battle.

BOOK VIII:356-375 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: I

The Rutulians, a sacred band, gathered for war.
Scions of Faunus, they lived in Daunus' realm,
under Laurentum's roofs, joying in Numicius'
stream: and they were joined by the Sicilians.
Men were sent out by Castrum, and by Ardea
once hostile to exiled Trojans, and Lanuvium
Juno's home on the steep hillside, and Collatia
that nurtured the virtuous Lucius Junius Brutus.
Those who love the grove of inexorable Diana
and the mouths of the Tiber, gathered, and those
who bathe Cybele's stone in Almo's warm flow.
From Tivoli they came, city of Arcadian Catillus,
and Praeneste, its sacred hill dedicated to Fortune,

Antemnae more ancient even than Crustumerium,
and Labicum, its men so handy with the plough,
and those too who drink imperial Tiber's waters,
and those too who live on the banks of the Anio,
and draw water from that chill lake Simbruvius,
and harrow the fields of Aequicula. All of these
Scaurus led, who though as yet of tender years
already showed promise of lasting glory. They
were not accustomed to hurl the spear in battle,
or empty the quiver filled with feathered shafts,
but preferred the javelin and handy short-sword,
wore bronze helms with plumes rising overhead.

BOOK VIII:376-411 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: II

Sezze, whose grape is chosen for Bacchus' own
table, sent its men, and famous Velletri's valley,
and Cora, and Segni of the bitter sparkling wine,
and the Pontine Marshes breeding disease, where
Satura's misty swamp clothes the land, the dark
Ufens driving its black mud-filled current through
soiled fields to stain the sea with slime. All these
were led by brave Scaevola, true to his ancestors,
whose shield displayed Mucius Scaevola's dread
heroic deed, when fire blazed on the altar and he,
in the midst of the Etruscans, turned his anger on
himself with a ruthless bravery seen on the shield.
Astounded by the example of steadfastness he set,
Lars Porsena was seen, on that shield, abandoning
the war and fleeing the sight of that scorched hand.
Sulla led men to war, who tilled Formia's slopes,
and Terracina's cliff-top fields, also the Hernici
who drive the ploughshare deep in stony ground,
and those who cultivate Anagnia's rich friable soil;
summoning bodies from Ferentino, and Priverno,
with Sora's warriors and their gleaming weapons.
Here were the lads from Scaptia and Fabrateria,
nor did men fail to descend from Atina's snowy

heights, and Suessa Pometia, reduced by the wars,
and Frosinone, battle-hardened behind the plough.
The tough men from Arpino, who live by the Liris
which mingles sulphurous water with the Fibreno
and runs its silent course to the sea, they too armed,
with them came warriors from Venafro and Larino,
while mighty Aquino too was drained of all its men.
Tullius led their mail-clad forces to battle, scion of
kings, whose ancestor was that Tullus Attius of old.
How noble his youthful promise, and how great his
immortal descendant, that Cicero, he gave to Italy,
whose voice would fill the earth, even past Ganges
and the Indian tribes, and that would quell the fury
of war in those thunderous speeches; he, in that way,
winning renown no other orator could hope to equal!

BOOK VIII:412-445 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: III

Behold, Nero, unequalled in his swift acts of daring,
he of the Spartan blood of Attus Clausus, rides before
the men of Amiterna, and Casperia of eastern-sounding
name, and Foruli, and Reiti sacred to Rea mother of all
the gods, and Norcia the home of frost; and the cohorts
from rocky Tetricus. They all bore spears, had rounded
shields, helmets unadorned, and a greave on the left leg.
They marched, some raising a song in honour of Sancus
founder of their people, while other praised you Sabus,
who gave a name to the wide possessions of the Sabines.
And what of Curio, who had roused the men of Picenum,
with his scaly armour and his horse-hair plume, almost
an army in himself! They roll past like the billows on
a stormy sea, that whiten among the breaking waves;
no brisker her cavalry when Penthesilea the Warrior
Maiden with her crescent-shaped shield reviews her
thousand squadrons, mimicking battle, till the earth
and Thermodon, the river of the Amazons, resound.
And here are to be seen those nurtured by the fields
of rocky Numana, and those for whom Cupra’s altar

smokes with incense by the shore, and those who guard the towers and the river-mouth of Truentum; their shield-ranks gleam far off with the sun's rays, throwing a blood-red radiance towards the clouds. Here stand the men of Ancona, which rivals Sidon, in its dyeing of cloth, the Libyan purple; here are the men of Adria, which is bathed by the Vomano; with the fierce standard-bearers of wooded Ascoli. Picus, the famous son of old Saturn, was founder and father of Ascoli Picenum long ago, he whom Circe changed into the woodpecker, condemning him to fly through the air, speckling his feathers with bright saffron as he fled. They say that even earlier the Pelasgians possessed the land, subjects of Aesis, from whom the name of the river Esino derives, and his people whom he called the Asili.

BOOK VIII:446-467 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: IV

And the rural Umbrians strengthened the forces no less, arriving from their hills and valleys washed not only by the Esino, but the Savio, the Metaurus, now Metauro, with its swift current eddying loudly among the rocks, and Clitunno, once the Clitumnus, that bathed their mighty bulls in its sacred waters; the Nar, or Nera, whose pale flow hastens to join the Tiber; the Tinia or Topino unknown to fame; the Clanis or Chiana; the Rubicon; and the Nevola once the Sena, named then for the Senones; while Father Tiber flows through their midst in a mighty tide, his channel grazing their walls. Their towns are Arna, Bevagna with its rich pastures, Spello, and Narni on its cliffs on the rocky mountain slope, Gubbio once unhealthy with its mists, and Foligno, that spreads un-walled on the open plain. They sent tough men: Amerians, and Camertes celebrated for sword and plough, the men of Sarsina rich in flocks, and warriors from Todi, no laggards in time of war.

These death-defying forces were led by Piso, with
handsome but boyish face, though with a wisdom
to equal his elders and an intellect beyond his years.
He led the vanguard, radiant in shining armour, as
a fiery gem gleams on the collar of a Parthian king.

BOOK VIII:468-494 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: V

Now another army appeared manned by Etruscans,
under Galba of glorious name. His ancestral line
derived from Minos, and that Pasiphae whom a
bull from the sea seduced, with all their famous
descendants. Cerveteri and Cortona, the seat of
proud Tarchon, sent their choicest men, so too
ancient Graviscae. That city by the sea Halaesus
the Argive loved, Alsium, sent its warriors also,
and Fregenae, bordered inland by a barren plain.
Fiesole was represented, that interprets winged
lightning from heaven, and Clusium, that once
menaced the walls of Rome, when Lars Porsena
demanded, in vain, that the Romans obey those
tyrants they expelled. And Luni sent men from
its marble quarries, from that famed harbour, as
spacious as any that, well-enclosed, can shelter
innumerable vessels. And Vetulonia, the pride,
once, of all Etruria. That city gave us the twelve
bundles of rods that go before a consul, those
twelve axes with their silent menace, she first
adorned the high curule chairs with ivory, and
first trimmed official robes with Tyrian purple;
while the bronze trumpet that stirs the warriors,
that too was her invention. With them gathered
the men of Nepi, and those Aequi of Falerium,
and those who hailed from Flavina, and those
who lived by the Sabatian and Ciminian pools,
their neighbours from Sutri, and those living
by Soracte, Phoebus sacred hill. Each carried
two spears, a wild-beast's pelt sufficient for
their heads, while scorning the Lycian bow.

BOOK VIII:495-523 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: VI

They all knew how to wage war, yet the Marsi
could not merely fight but also send snakes to
sleep by the use of spells, and rob the serpent's
tooth of venom by means of herbs and charms.
Anguitia, they say, a daughter of Aeetes, first
showed them the use of magic herbs, teaching
them how to banish the moon from the sky, to
halt the flow of rivers with their cries, denude
the hills by summoning the trees. Their name
though derives from Marsyas, who fleeing in
fear over the sea from Phrygian Crenai, after
Apollo's lyre outplayed his Mygdonian flute,
settled there. Maruvium, is their capital, which
bears the famous name of the ancient Marrus,
while further inland lies Alba Fucens, among
the water-meadows, fruit-trees compensating
for its lack of corn. Their other citadels, with
no name among the people, unknown to fame,
are nonetheless ample in number, too. They
were quickly joined by the Pelignians, who
brought their men swiftly from chilly Sulmo.
And no less eager were the men from Teano
Sidicinum, whose mother-city is Cales with
no mean founder, but, as legend tells, Calais,
nurtured in Thracian caves by Orithyia, she
having been carried off through the stormy
air by wanton Boreas. There too were those
serried ranks of the Vestini, inferior to none
in battle, toughened by hunting wild-beasts,
while their flocks graze on Mount Fiscellus,
over green Pinna, and the meadows of Aveia,
which are quick to renew their growth again.
The Marrucini, and their rivals the Frentani,
gathered too, bringing the men of Corfinium,
and great Chieti. All these bore a pike to war,
a sling that had downed many a bird, and for
armour wore bear-skins, spoils of the hunt.

BOOK VIII:495-523 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: VI

The Oscans, too, whom Campania, rich in
wealth and noble blood, had sent from her
wide realm to fight, were stationed close by,
waiting for their leader. Men from Sinuessa
of the warm springs; from Volturnum within
sound of the sea; Amyclae whose mother-city
in Laconia, silence once ruined; Fondi and
Gaeta, realm of Laestrygonian King Lamus,
and home to King Antiphates' deep harbour;
Liternum with its marshy pools, and Cumae
with its oracle that could foretell the future.
From Nuceria and Mount Gaurus too, and
from Puteoli, men raised from their arsenal.
Naples, the Greek Parthenope, gave many
a soldier also, Nola which would repulse
Hannibal, and Alife, and Acerra, forever
threatened by its river Clanius. You might
have seen the Sarrastians and all the men
from along the gentle river Sarno. There
were picked troops from the Phlegraean
bays rich in sulphur; from Miseno, and
Baiae, the seat of Baius the Ithacan, pilot
to Odysseus, with its giant volcanic crater.
The men of Procida's isle were there, of
Ischia, a place appointed for ever-burning
Typhoeus, and Capri the rocky island of
Teleboas, and Calatia with its little walls.
Sorrento too sent men, and stony Avella
poor in arable land to plough; above all
Capua was represented there, though she
unable to restrain herself in prosperity,
would be undone by her perverse pride!

BOOK VIII:546-561 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: VIII

Young Scipio organised all these fine men
for war, funding javelins and steel armour;
the native weapons being much lighter, in
the manner of their fathers, fire-hardened
wooden shafts lacking iron points, clubs
and axes, forged for rural labour. Amongst
them, Scipio, showed promise of his fame
to come, flinging stakes, leaping trenches
beneath city walls, meeting the sea-waves
fully armed, such his brave display before
his men. Often his swift feet outran some
charger as it flew by, spurred savagely over
the open plain, often standing tall he would
hurl a stone or spear beyond the boundary
of the camp. With martial brow, flowing
untrimmed hair, and a bright gentle gaze,
he awed and delighted those who saw him.

BOOK VIII:562-587 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: IX

The Samnites also gathered, their allegiance
not to Carthage as of yet, but still revealing
their ancient enmity to Rome; the reapers of
Paduli and Nucrae, and the hunters of Boiano,
those who cling to the Caudine pass; and those
Rufrae and Isernia sent; and remote Ordona
from her untilled slopes. The Bruttians came,
equal in spirit to any, and the warriors out of
the Lucanian Hills, and the Hirpini; all with
their sharp spears and clothed in the shaggy
pelts of wild beasts. They won a living from
the hunt, dwelt in the woods, quenched their
thirst in the rivers, earning their sleep by toil.
All these were joined by the men of Calabria,
and troops from Sallentia and from Brindisi,

out of Italy's far south. Their command was granted to bold Cethegus, who controlled their united forces, not separate companies. Here were men from Leucosia, and those Picentia sent from Paestum, and men from Cerillae, later emptied by the Punic army, and those nurtured by the Silarus, or Sele, river, which they say could turn branches dipped in its flow to stone. And Cethegus praised too the sickle-shaped swords, with which the fighting Salernians were armed, and the rough oak clubs which the warriors from Buxentum shaped to their grip. While he himself, with shoulders and arms bare in the manner of his ancestors, took delight in his mettlesome steed, exerting his youthful strength, wheeling his hard-mouthed mount.

BOOK VIII:588-621 THE ITALIAN FORCES AT CANNAE: X

You too, tribes of the River Po, though now reduced and bereft of men, rushed to battle and defeat, no god listening to your prayers. Piacenza, though crippled by war, vied with Modena, while Cremona sent out her sons in its rivalry with Mantua, home of the Muses, exalted to the heavens by Virgil's immortal verse, in emulation of Homer's lyre. They came from Verona through which the Adige flows; from Faenza, skilfully nurturing her pine trees, grown everywhere to surround her fields; Vercelli, and Polenzo with its wealth from dusky fleeces; and Bologna with its Reno river, the 'little Rhine', that was once the seat of Ocnus, and joined with Aeneas against Laurentum long ago. There came the men of Ravenna, they who drag their heavy oars slowly through muddy

water, cleaving their stagnant marshy pools; and a force from Padua, from the Euganean country, once exiled with Antenor from his sacred shore; Aquileia with a complement of the Veneti; and the agile men of Liguria, and the Vagenni who live scattered along its rocky shore, they too sent hardy youths to swell the Roman ranks, and Hannibal's triumph. Brutus led them all, their great hope, and he roused their courage against this enemy they already knew. Cheerful, though dignified, his powerful intellect gained hearts, with nothing severe in his manner: it was never his way to adopt a frowning face or win unhappy praise for harshness: nor did he court notoriety by exceeding the limits of the ordered life. Add, to all these, three thousand skilled archers sent by Hiero of Syracuse from Sicilian Etna, while Elba armed fewer men with her native iron that war loves, yet all of them eager to wield a sword. He might well have excused Varro's zeal to fight a battle, who saw so mighty an army muster. When great Agamemnon attacked Troy, that Hellespont which Leander swam saw the thousand ships moor, with as vast a host, at Rhoeteum.

BOOK VIII:622-655 OMENS OF DISASTER

On reaching Cannae, the site of an ancient city, the Roman forces set up their doomed standards on the ill-omened ramparts. Nor, did the gods, with impending destruction hanging over the army, fail to foretell that imminent disaster. Javelins, in the hands of their astonished owners, were wreathed

in fire; tall battlements along the walls fell;
the quivering summit of Mount Garganus
collapsed and laid low the forest; Aufidus
quaked and roared in its river-bed; while,
over the distant waves sailors were terrified
as fires burned high on the Ceraunian hills.
The day was plunged into sudden darkness,
and Calabrian mariners searched in vain for
the coast and headland of Sipontum; while
shriek-owls perched on the camp's gates.
Dense swarms of bees constantly wound
themselves around the quivering standards,
and more than one bright comet, dethroner
of kings, shone balefully, with its hairy tail.
In the silence of the night wild beasts broke
through ramparts and entered camp, snatching
up sentries before their frightened comrades'
gaze, scattering the limbs over nearby fields.
Dreadful visions mocked sleep: men dreamt
that the Gallic shades were rising from their
graves. In Rome, the Tarpeian Rock shook
repeatedly, and was split at the base; while
a stream of dark blood flowed from Jove's
temple; and the ancient statue of Quirinus,
the deified Romulus, shed floods of tears.
The fatal Allia overflowed its banks; while
the Alps quaked, and the Apennines' vast
gorges trembled all day and night. Bright
meteors crossed Italy from African skies,
and the heavens burst apart with a dreadful
crash as the face of the Thunderer was seen.
Vesuvius roared too, spewing flames like
Etna's, and its fiery plume hurled rocks to
the clouds, and touched the trembling stars.

BOOK VIII:656-676 A SOLDIER FORETELLS DISASTER

Behold, a soldier in their midst now prophesied
the outcome of the battle, his mind and aspect
distracted, he filled all the camp with his wild
cries, gasping out news of the tragedy to come:
'Oh, merciless gods, spare us; there is not room
enough now for those heaps of dead; I see him,
the Carthaginian commander, charging through
our serried ranks, driving his chariot furiously
over human limbs, weapons, and our standards.
The wind gusts wildly, driving the dust of war
in our faces. You are lost, Gnaeus Servilius,
careless of your life, your absence at Lake
Trasimene's field of no avail! Where goes
Varro? By the gods, Aemilius Paullus, last
hope of the despairing, is downed by a rock!
Trebia cannot rival such destruction. Behold,
the Aufidus reeks and spews out corpses, as
the heaped bodies of the dead bridge its flow,
as the Carthaginian elephants tread the plain
in victory. Hannibal carries the consular axes,
after our fashion, lictors bear blood-stained
rods, the pomp of triumph passing now from
Rome to Libya. O tragedy! Do you command
us to witness even this, O you powers above?
Victorious Carthage weighs Rome's defeat in
gold-rings torn from the left hands of the dead!'

End of Book VIII of the Punica

BOOK IX

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BOOK IX:1-38 PAULLUS DELAYS, VARRO ROUSES THE MEN

Though Rome was troubled by these portents
and the gods revealed in vain their signals of
approaching disaster throughout Italy, Varro,
as if the omens for the coming battle were all
positive and favourable, refrained from sleep
that night, brandishing his sword at shadows,
blaming Paullus for inaction, while longing,
in the dark, for the blare of the war-trumpets.
Nor was Hannibal any less eager to engage.
Prompted to an evil fate, our soldiers burst
from camp, and a skirmish ensued; Macae
warriors, who had been foraging in the plain,
let loose a cloud of arrows. Here Mancinus,
delighting in leading the attack and staining
his sword with enemy blood, fell, and many
a man with him. Though Paullus claimed, on
the contrary, that the entrails of the sacrifices
were inauspicious, and the gods unfavourable,
Varro only halted the charge because alternate
days' command of the army by the consuls,
denied him the authority to rush to his doom,
yet this only gave those men about to perish
a day's reprieve. So, they returned to camp,
Paullus lamenting, knowing that tomorrow
this madman would command, and he had
saved his men's lives to little purpose. For
Varro, deeply angered, resenting this delay
in furthering the battle, addressed him thus:
'Is this how you show gratitude, Paullus,
and repay me for saving your life? Is this
my reward for rescuing you from the law's
clutches and a jury determined on mischief?
You might as well order them to surrender
the swords and spears you withdrew from
the attack to the enemy, now, or disarm
these men yourself. But, men, I saw your

faces wet with tears when Paullus told you
to turn your backs in retreat. Don't await
the customary sign for battle; let each man,
when the sun's first rays strike the summit
of Garganus, command himself, and seek
out his own path of action. I myself will
throw open the gates without delay. Rush
on, swiftly, reclaim this day's lost work.'
So, in his excitement, he aroused a fatal
desire for battle in those frustrated troops.

BOOK IX:39-65 PAULLUS WARNS VARRO

Now Paullus, no longer seemed the same
man in mind and aspect, but as one who
stood after a battle, the field strewn with
Roman corpses before his eyes, as that
looming disaster imposed on his vision;
like some mother stricken and senseless,
with all hope of her son's life lost, who
holds in a last embrace his limbs which
are not yet cold. 'By the walls of Rome,'
he cried, 'so often shaken; by these good
men the Stygian shadows now surround;
refrain, Varro, from marching to disaster.
While the gods' anger passes, the wrath
of Fortune ebbs, be happy if these raw
recruits can learn to endure Hannibal's
name and not freeze at sight of the foe.
Can you not see how the sound of his
approach drives the blood from their
shocked faces instantly, as the swords
fall from their hands at the trumpet's
sound? Though you believe Fabius is
weak and an idler, every soldier he led
to war beneath his banner is here today,
while as for Flaminius and his men –
well, let heaven avert the evil omen!

Open your ears to the god, even if your
mind is set against my warnings and my
entreaties. Cumae's priestess, long ago
in the days of our ancestors, prophesied
all this, and her knowledge announced
you, and all your madness, to the world.
Now I too will tell of your fate, to your
face, and in no uncertain terms: unless
you hold back the standards tomorrow,
you will seal the words of Apollo's Sibyl
with my blood; and this field no longer
be known because of Diomede the Greek,
but you, the Roman consul, if you live.'
And tears sprang from his burning eyes.

BOOK IX:66-119 THE STORY OF SATRICUS AND HIS SONS

A crime committed in error also left its
stain on that night. One Satricus, taken
prisoner by Xanthippus, and enduring
slavery in Libya, had next been given
to the king of the Autololes, amongst
the prizes given that king to recognise
his valour. Satricus was born in Sulmo,
and had left two infant boys there, still
suckling at their mother's breast; these
sons were called Mancinus and Solimus,
a Trojan name, as their distant ancestor
was a Trojan follower of Aeneas, who
founded a famous city and called it, after
himself, Solimus, though when peopled
later by Italian colonists that name was
shortened to Sulmo. Satricus now went
to war, amongst the barbarian host and
following his king; the Libyans happy
to employ him on occasion to interpret
for them in speaking with the Romans.
Now when opportunity arose to revisit

his native Sulmo, with hopes of seeing his home again, he summoned night's aid then stole from the hated camp. He fled unarmed, since carrying his shield might betray his absence, starting out without a weapon and then, examining the corpses on the field, appropriating weapons from a dead man. Now fear was lessened, although, unbeknown to him, the corpse he had despoiled, from whose inanimate body he had stripped the prizes he now bore, was that of his own son, Mancinus, killed by Libyans some hours before. Behold, when night fell, when the Roman camp was asleep, the other son, Solimus, following a turn of guard duty at the gate, went to search for the body of his brother among that litter of corpses on the field, wishing to bury the ill-fated lad in secret. He had not gone far when he saw an armed man approaching from the Punic camp, and in his surprise seized the opportunity to hide behind the tomb of Aetolian Thoas. Then seeing no more of the enemy, but merely a lone man walking in the dark, he sprang from hiding and hurled his javelin at the father's unprotected back. It struck: his father, Satricus, believing he was pursued by some Carthaginians, and that his wound was of their making, looked round anxiously to find its author. But when the perpetrator, Solimus, came near, running in his youthful vigour, sad to note the moonlight reflected from that shield full in his face, the shield his father took from Mancinus, clearly recognisable. Now Solimus, flaming with sudden anger, cried: 'No true son of Satricus, no patriot

from Sulmo, no true brother to Mancinus
would I be, nor a worthy scion of Trojan
Solimus, should I let this enemy escape
unpunished! Must he sport noble spoils
stolen from my brother? Shall this thief
carry off that glorious armour from our
Pelignian house, before my eyes, while
I am still alive to intervene? It is to you,
Acca, my mother, I must carry it, to ease
your grief, so that you might set it forever
on your son's grave!' So, with a loud cry,
he rushed forward, his sword unsheathed.

BOOK IX:120-177 THE DYING SATRICUS ISSUES A WARNING

But sword and shield were already slipping
from Satricus' grasp, his mind and senses
stunned, frozen with horror, on hearing Sulmo
named, his wife, his boys; and a terrible cry
emerged from his lips in dying: 'O, my son,
spare your hand, not that I might live (for
to wish that would be wrong) but that you
might not bring a curse upon it, shedding
your father's blood. For I am your father,
Satricus, that son of Solimus captured
long ago by Carthaginians, and only now
I return to my native place. You, my son,
have done no wrong. It was a Carthaginian
at whom you hurled that spear so hastily,
though I had stolen from that hated camp,
and was hurrying home, eager to look on
your mother's face again, having snatched
this shield from the dead. Now, my only
living son, carry it back, purged of guilt,
to set on your brother's tomb. But let your
first care, my son, be to warn your general,
Paullus, to prolong the war, and to deny
Hannibal all opportunity for battle, for he,

delighted by the divine omens, longs for
quick engagement and mighty slaughter.
Entreat him to contain Varro's madness,
for they say he is urging his standards on.
That will be solace enough for me, as
my wretched life is ending, to have at
least warned my countrymen. And now,
grant the father you have found and lost
in the selfsame hour, one last embrace.'
So saying, he loosed his helm, clasping
his son, who stood in terror, motionless,
his arms trembling. Fearing for that son
who was horror-stricken, he sought for
words to heal the shame of the wound
inflicted in the darkness, and to excuse
the blow: 'No one was there to see, no
man knows. Has not the night's shadow
concealed the error? Why tremble thus?
Clasp me to your breast, instead, my boy.
I, your father, pronounce you innocent,
and ask you to close my eyes with your
own hand, and mark an end to trouble.'
The youth groaned aloud in his distress,
finding no voice or word to make reply:
yet he hastened to stop the dark blood's
flow and bandage the wound with a strip
torn from his clothes while his tears fell.
At last a complaint issued amidst those
groans: 'Father, is this how cruel Fate
returns you to your country, and to us?
Is this how she restores father to son,
and son to father? How much happier
my brother's fortune, whom death has
denied the recognition of his father. I,
whom the enemy did not kill, oh, it is I
who recognised him in wounding him!
Fate should at least have allowed this
solace for my crime, to have spared me
the clear knowledge of our sad kinship.

It remains for the cruel powers above to
reveal his warning.' For while his son,
was speaking wildly, the father, through
loss of blood, had released his last breath
into the empty air, and the youth raising
his eyes to the heavens cried: 'O, Titania,
you, who witnessed the wrong performed
by my sinful hand, you, whose pale light
showed my weapon the path in the night
to my father's body, you must no longer
be profaned by sight of my accursed face.'
So saying, he drove his sword into his
own flesh, yet, as the blood flowed from
the deep wound he stemmed it and wrote
his father's message in crimson letters
on his shield: Varro, beware of battle!
Then, hanging it from his spear, flung
himself on his lamented father's body.

BOOK IX:178-216 HANNIBAL EXHORTS HIS TROOPS

Such were the omens of the battle to come,
sent from the gods above to the Romans.
Little by little, the shadows vanished, and
night that had witnessed all that occurred
yielded to roseate dawn. The Carthaginian
and Roman leaders summoned their men
to battle after their fashion, and such a day
began for our enemies as the centuries will
never see again. Hannibal cried; 'You men,
need no words of exhortation, who have
marched from the Pillars of Hercules to
Apulia' fields; nothing remains of brave
Saguntum; the Alps have yielded; while
the River Po, proud father of the Italian
streams, flows through a conquered land.
The Trebia is deep in corpses, Flaminius'
body lies low on Etruscan soil, and fields

no plough furrows are whitened far and wide by Roman bones. A day now dawns that brings wider fame, greater bloodshed. Fame is enough and more than enough to repay me for war's labours; let yours be the other spoils. All the wealth their ships have brought from the Ebro, all that Rome displayed in her Sicilian triumphs, and all she holds that was snatched from Libyan shores, all, without casting lots, is yours. Take home all your right hands win: I, your general, seek not honour in riches. These Trojan robbers have conquered and despoiled the world for centuries, all for you! You, who trace your origins back to Tyre and Sidon, I shall let you choose the best land, and add it to your prize, whether Laurentum's acres tilled by Roman colonists, or Syrtis' fields where the corn sprouts a hundredfold. And I shall grant you those meadows watered by Tiber's yellow stream, wide pasture land to graze our enemy's flocks. To our allies of foreign blood who fight under the Punic banner, I say, that if any man raises a hand red with Roman blood he shall thereafter be a citizen of Carthage. Do not be deceived by the sight of Mount Garganus, of Apulia's soil, you stand now before the gates of Rome, for though she is far distant from this place of war, she will fall here and now, and I shall never need call you to arms again; from this battlefield lies your road to the Capitol.'

BOOK IX:217-243 THE CARTHAGINIANS PREPARE

So he spoke, then they demolished their
defensive ramparts and hastened to cross
the trenches in their way. Hannibal set
his lines in order, along the winding bank
of Aufidus, following the lie of the land.
The Nasimonians, in barbarous multitude,
stood ready for battle and held the left wing,
beside the Marmaridae, giants in stature;
fierce Moors; the Garamantes and Macae;
the Massylian warriors, and Adrymachidae
en masse, they who dwell by the Nile, who
delight in warfare, skins burnt black in that
merciless sun. Their captain and commander
was Nealces. Mago held the right wing where
Aufidus curves and bends upon itself with
meandering waters. Here the light troops
from beyond the rugged Pyrenees stood,
filling the river-banks with noisy tumult,
their round shields shining in the sunlight;
At the front the Cantabrians; bare-headed
Vascones; the Balearic slingers who hurl
leaden bullets; men of the Guadalquivir.
Hannibal himself, mounted, controlled
the centre manned by Carthaginian forces
and ranks of Gauls who had often bathed
in the River Po. But where the winding
waters of Aufidus swung about, granting
the troops no protection, there elephants
swayed to and fro, huge turrets, bulwarks,
on their dusky backs like a mobile rampart
their tall structures lifting to the heavens.
Lastly the Numidian cavalry were ordered
to roam about, moving from place to place
so rendering themselves active everywhere.

BOOK IX:244-266 VARRO HEARS OF THE WARNING

As Hannibal positioned his eager forces, he
exhorted them endlessly; time and time again
rousing a man by reminding him of his past
deeds, boasting he knew the arm that hurled
each sounding javelin, promising to witness
as to what each man achieved. Meanwhile,
Varro sent out his men beyond the ramparts
and began the race towards disaster, Charon,
the ferryman over the pale stream of the Styx,
pleased to make room for the shades to come.
The vanguard halted, warned by those letters
of blood on the suspended shield, mute and
motionless before the omen. A dreadful sight
faced them: the ill-fated father and son locked
together, the son's hand on the father's chest
to hide the fatal wound. Tears were shed, and
their grief for Mancinus was redoubled by his
brother's death; while the omen troubled them,
with the likeness between the faces of the dead.
Varro was soon told of that sad act committed
in error, its sorrowful result, and of the shield
with its warning against battle. 'Tell Paullus
of your omen,' he cried in anger, 'he, whose
cowardly heart is full of fear, might be moved
by the infamous hand of a parricide, who when
the avenging Furies came, in dying, employed
his father's blood, to write an impious message.'

BOOK IX:267-286 THE BATTLE OF CANNAE (216BC)

Then, with threats, Varro disposed his forces for
battle. He himself with the Marsians, the Samnite
standards, and Apulians held the left wing opposite
fierce Nealces and the savage tribes he commanded.
In the centre (where he saw Hannibal was stationed)
Servilius was ordered to face attack, leading the men

of Umbria and Picenum. Paullus held the right wing
with the remaining forces. Finally, the young Scipio
had orders to repel any surprise attacks by the swift
Numidian cavalry, and told to scatter if they with skill
and cunning broke formation themselves. Now those
two armies closed, and the rapid motion, the neighing
horses, the loud clatter of weapons, raised a dull roar
through the moving ranks. So the sea, when the winds
rouse themselves in battle, filled with a fury powerful
enough to drench the stars, whilst churning in its bed,
breathes menacing sounds among the reefs and, driven
from its caves, stirs the restless water to eddying foam.

BOOK IX:287-303 THE GODS TAKE SIDES

Nor indeed, with the cruel Fates in play, was that tumult
confined to earth; the madness of conflict invaded heaven
and drove the gods to war. Here Mars, Apollo at his side,
fought for the Romans, with Neptune, lord of the stormy
sea; and with them a frantic Venus, Vesta, and Hercules
stung by the slaughter at Saguntum's fall; revered Cybele,
and Faunus and Father Quirinus, the native gods of Italy;
and Castor and Pollux who live in turn in the upper world.
For the Carthaginians, Juno, Saturn's daughter, her sword
at her side; Pallas, born of Lake Tritonis' Libyan waters;
Ammon their native god, with curved horns on his brow;
and a vast company of lesser deities too. As they moved
Mother Earth shook beneath their tread, some occupying
the neighbouring mountains, apart, some taking their place
behind a high cloud; emptying heaven, descending to fight.

BOOK IX:304-339 THE ARMIES ENGAGE AND HOLD THEIR GROUND

An immense clamour rose to the empty sky, as loud
as the shouts of the earthborn Giants who assailed
the heavens on Phlegra's plain; as loud as the cry
with which Jupiter, the eternal Father, demanded

fresh lightning-bolts from the Cyclopes, while he
witnessed the Giants attack, they piling mountain
on mountain to storm the celestial realm. No one
spear was first hurled in this fresh, mighty onset,
rather a cloud of missiles hissed through the air
in emulation; while men on both sides, eager for
blood, were caught at once in the crossfire, many
dying before their swords could be drawn in anger.
In their zeal, they clambered over their comrades'
bodies, despite their groans, trod them underfoot.
Carthaginian pressure failed to dislodge the Roman
line or turn it, and nor could the solid Punic ranks
be pierced. As well might the sea uproot Gibraltar
with its pounding waves. Blows failed for lack of
space, the close-packed dead without room to fall.
Helms clashed violently against opposing helms,
sparking fire, as shields shattered against shields,
swords broke on swords, foot pressed against foot,
man on man. The ground was coated with a film
of blood, and dense darkness beneath the shower
of missiles hid the sky above. Those whom Fate
had positioned in the second line, attacked with
long lances and extended spears, as if at the front,
while those who stood in inglorious ranks behind,
strove to emulate those ahead by hurling javelins.
To the rear, shouting did the work of war, soldiers,
denied a chance to fight, hurling showers of abuse
at the enemy. Every kind of missile was employed,
stakes, burning brands, heavy javelins, while some
used slings, threw stones, or sent their lances flying.
Here an arrow went hissing through the air, or there
the falarica was in play, that can shatter city walls.

BOOK IX:340-369 THE BREAKING OF THE ROMAN LINE

How can I hope, you Muses, whose devotee I am,
to recount that day for future ages in mere mortal
verse? Can you grant such utterance that I might

speak of Cannae with this single solitary voice?
If our glory pleases you, if you do not frown on
this great enterprise, summon up all your music,
and that of your sire, Apollo. If only you Romans
were to bear ongoing success with the spirit you
showed then in adversity! For, I pray that the gods
refrain from ever trying to discover whether this
Trojan race of ours could face such a war again!
And you, Rome, anxious then as to your destiny,
do not shed tears, I beg you: bless those wounds
that will ever bring you glory. For you will never
seem greater than then; your later prosperity will
only weaken you, such that only your nobility in
defeat will preserve your fame. For now, Fortune,
ebbing and flowing on either side, thwarted both
armies, meeting zeal with uncertainty, the hopes
of Rome and Carthage long poised in the balance
as the battle raged equally; like to when the winds
stir the green stalks, and bend the un-ripened ears,
and a sea of wheat, swaying to and fro, bows and
nods, glittering, bending slowly this way and that.
But Nealces, at last, with his horde of barbarians,
charged with a savage cry, broke the Roman line
and scattered it. The closed ranks parted, the foe
poured wildly through the gap at their frightened
enemy. Then a torrent of blood, in a dark stream,
poured over the plain, and the dead were struck
by many a spear, while the Romans, ashamed to
be felled from behind, turned to face some fatal
blow and, welcoming death, escaped dishonour.

BOOK IX:370-410 THE DEATHS OF SCAEVOLA AND MARIUS

Scaevola, always courting danger and equal to every
risk, stood in the front line at the centre of the field;
and, with so many dead, no longer wished for life,
but yearned for a glorious end worthy of his great
ancestor. Seeing the day was lost, and the toll rising,

he cried: ‘Life is brief, let me grasp what little of it remains, for courage is an empty name if the hour is insufficient to win a glorious death.’ So saying, he gathered all his strength, rushing into the midst of the fray while Hannibal was clearing a path with his tireless arm. There he stabbed Caralis, who was about to fasten his victim’s armour to a lofty tree, and drove the sword to its hilt in his fury, so that Caralis fell and rolled, biting alien soil, smothering the pain of his dying, in the dust. Nor could Gabar or Siccha, united in rage and valour, halt Scaevola: for brave Gabar lost his right hand as he stood firm, while Siccha, grief-stricken, hastening to his aid incautiously, chanced to tread on the sword, and fell dying beside his comrade, cursing too late at fighting barefoot. At last Scaevola’s ascendance attracted the deadly weapons of Nealces, who springing forward swift as lightning, was eager for the spoils of war owned by a famous name. He seized a boulder, torn from a cliff by a torrent and carried down from the high hills, hurling it furiously at Scaevola’s face. The teeth rattled shattered by that heavy mass, the features were destroyed, blood and brain-matter gushed from the nostrils, while the dark discharge, emitted by the eyes, flowed down from the eye-sockets in that mutilated face. Next Marius fell, while trying to save Caper, his friend, yet fearful of witnessing his friend’s death. Born on the same day, natives of Palestrina, poverty the lot of both families, they were school-fellows, and tilled neighbouring fields. In likes and dislikes they were one, theirs a lasting union of two minds, where true concord made them rich in poverty. They died together; of all their prayers Fate granting but one, to fall side by side in battle. Symatheus the victor won both sets of armour.

BOOK IX:411-450 SCIPIO RESCUES VARRO

But the Carthaginians were not allowed to enjoy
their good fortune long. For Scipio, taking pity
on men whose backs were turned in flight, came
fierce and menacing, with Varro too the cause
of all this misery, and blond Curio, and Brutus,
a descendant of Junius Brutus the first consul.
With this support the men might have regained
lost ground, given a fresh effort, if a sudden
onslaught by the Punic leader had not checked
the ranks as they ran forward. Sighting Varro,
far off over the field, with the lictors in scarlet
tunics wheeling round him, Hannibal shouted:
'I see a consul's guard, I know those insignia:
those of Flaminius, not long ago,' Thundering
on his huge shield in rage, he proclaimed his
fury. Alas for Varro! Death then, at Hannibal's
hand, might have rendered him Paullus' equal,
but heaven's anger would not let him die thus.
How often, you gods, would he reproach you,
for saving him from the Carthaginian's sword!
For Scipio, attacking suddenly, brought rescue
from imminent death, placing himself in danger
instead; while Hannibal, although the glory of
winning the general's spoils was snatched from
him, was happy, now the chance of a duel was
offered him at last, to change his antagonist for
a greater warrior and punish Scipio for having
saved the consul his father's life at the Ticinus.
Here, though reared in diverse lands, stood
two warriors as equally matched in prowess
as the earth has ever seen, yet in other ways
the Roman was superior, in duty and honour.
Mars, fearing now for Scipio, and Minerva,
for Hannibal, descended from a misty cloud
to the battlefield, that appearance of the gods
making men tremble, though the champions
were undismayed. Wherever Minerva turned,

a baleful light flashed from the Gorgon face
on her breastplate as the serpents, displayed
on the aegis there, let out a dreadful hissing.
Her blood-shot eyes blazed like twin comets,
waves of fire rolling from the mighty crest
on her helm, as Mars, driving the air before
him with a flourish of his spear, covering all
the battlefield with his shield, rose erect, his
armour, a gift of the Cyclopes, glowing with
Etna's flames, his crest golden against the sky.

BOOK IX:451-485 MINERVA RESCUES HANNIBAL

The champions, intent on battle and a close test
of each other's courage, were nevertheless aware
of the advent of the armed gods, as both of them,
roused to greater fury, joyed at divine witnesses.
Minerva deflected a spear directed at Hannibal's
front, while Mars, following her example, applied
it to Scipio, placing a sword forged on Etna in his
hand, and stirring him to greater efforts. At that,
the Virgin goddess became inflamed deep within,
a sudden fieriness suffused her savage aspect, and
eyes askance her furious gaze outdid the Gorgon.
Her aegis quivered and all the snakes there reared
their vile bodies, while her first furious onslaught
made even Mars retreat slowly from the conflict.
Then the goddess tore away a neighbouring piece
of the hillside and hurled the rugged mass of rock
angrily at Mars, such that the sound, borne far off,
terrified all the isle of Sason, shaking its coastline.
But the duel was witnessed by the lord of the gods,
and Jove was swift to send Iris, wreathed in mist,
to calm their excessive ardour, saying: 'Goddess,
glide down, in haste, to Italy, and tell Minerva to
quench her wild anger at her brother, and not to
hope to reverse these fixed laws of Fate; and say
also, if she will not desist (for I know the power

and energy of that fiery mind) or abate her ire,
she will find my lightning bolts outdo the aegis.'
When Tritonis' virgin goddess heard the message,
she was uncertain at first whether to yield to her
father's weapons, then said: 'I will leave the fight,
yet how will Minerva's absence avert what is to
come? How will he avoid witnessing it all on
high, if raging slaughter grips Garganus' fields?'
So saying, she caught up Hannibal in a dense mist,
and carried him to a distant part, then quit the earth.

BOOK IX:486-523 JUNO RELEASES THE SOUTH-EAST WIND

Meanwhile Mars, roused by the goddess' return to
the heavens, renewed his purpose and, cloaked in
a mist, with his mighty hand, raised the Roman
fallen from the field to new life. They re-raised
the standards and began a fresh onslaught, while
fear gripped the enemy. But now, Aeolus, lord
of the winds, who holds them imprisoned in his
cave, he whom the gales that fill the sky obey,
yielded to Juno's pleading, she offering him no
mean reward, and so let loose on the battlefield
all the fury of Vulturnus, the south-easterly that
rules the Apulian plains, whom Juno requested
as her means of revenge. First he plunged deep
in Etna's crater and caught fire, then raised his
fiery face and flew, with a dreadful roar, above
Italy, driving a dense black cloud of dust before
him. Pitiful to say, the gale rendered the Romans
blind, dumb and helpless, as its wild force blew
the whirling clouds of burning sand in their faces;
delighting in its task, battling against the soldiers.
The men, their armour, and trumpets were felled
en masse, every lance bent backward by the blast,
and every missile they hurled falling behind them;
while the same gale aided the Carthaginian attack,
the howling wind accelerating their javelins, as if

hurled with the thong, and hastening their spears.
At last the men, stifled by dense dust, could only
mourn close-mouthed an inglorious path to death.
Vulturnus himself, his face concealed in darkness,
his blond hair deeply masked with sand, now spun
his victims round, his hissing wings blasting them
from behind, now struck them wildly in the front,
rattling their weapons against them, shrieking at
them with open mouth. If they were deep in battle,
raising their swords to an enemy throat, he foiled
the intended blow, dashed the upraised hand away.
Dissatisfied with merely spreading panic among
the Roman ranks, he drove the howling tempest
at Mars himself, twice making his crest tremble!

BOOK IX:524-555 MINERVA AND JUNO UPBRAID JOVE

While the wind in fury battled against the Romans,
and roused Mars to anger, Minerva, accompanied
by Juno, addressed Jove. ‘What tumult Mars raises
against the Punic army, see the carnage with which
he slakes his wrath. Why do you not send Iris now
to Earth? For my purpose there was never to crush
the Romans (let Rome rule, you have my pledge,
and there I would see the Palladium, my symbol)
only to ensure that the glory of our Libyan land,
Hannibal, not be killed in the flower of his youth,
and all that promise be extinguished in the bud!’
While Juno, angered by her endless task, added:
‘Yes, if you wish the world to know the vast extent
of your power, how far it surpasses the other gods,
well then, my husband, why not destroy all those
Carthaginian fortresses with your lightning bolts,
bury her warriors in a deep chasm of the earth, or
plunge them in the sea (I will beg for nothing)!’
Jupiter replied mildly: ‘You are battling against
fate, and both hold out unreasonable hope. My
daughter, that young Scipio against whom you

aim your hostile spear, will destroy the might
of Africa, win from that a name, and then bear
the laurels of Libyan conquest to the Capitol.
And Hannibal, whose courage and glory you,
my wife, augment (I speak his destiny) will
lead his forces from Italy. The turning-point
in all this slaughter is not far off: the day and
hour will come when he will regret he ever
crossed the Alps.' So saying, Jove sent Iris
arcing down from Olympus, to recall Mars
while ordering him to quit the fight. Not
daring to disobey, Mars ascended through
the high clouds, protesting loudly, joying,
as he does, in the blare of the war-trumpet,
in blood, wounds, and the sound of battle.

BOOK IX:556-598 HANNIBAL DEPLOYS HIS ELEPHANTS

When the field was free at last of warring gods,
Mars no longer occupying the plain, Hannibal
arrived, out of the far field to which he had fled
step by step from the celestial weapons, yet now,
shouting loudly, brought the infantry, cavalry,
heavy siege engines, and the elephants porting
defensive towers on their backs. Recognising
Minucius, who was attacking the lightly armed
warriors with his sword, anger flared across his
blood-stained visage, as he called out: 'What
Fury, what god spurs you on to battle, daring
to face me a second time? Where now Fabius
who was once a father to you, who saved you
from my spear? Wretch, be happy if you twice
escape my hand!' Then his spear, adding insult,
its power like a battering ram, pierced Minucius
in the chest, and quenched the reply on his lips.
Nor was steel sufficient to sate Hannibal's fury.
The dusky elephants were now deployed, pitting
monstrous beasts against Romans soldiers. For

Hannibal rode along the line, ordering the Moors
who roused and controlled those Lucanian cattle
in war, to spur their charges on, drive the Libyan
herd forwards; and, trumpeting wildly, roused by
many a goad, the warlike beasts ploughed ahead.
A tower, freighted with men, their javelins, and
burning brands, topped every back, and a fierce
hail of stones showered far and wide on the field,
while the Libyans, on their perches, poured out
a shower of missiles from those swaying turrets.
The ranks of white tusks stretched out in serried
lines, while every tusk was tipped with a blade,
the points on the curving mounts flashing down,
slicing by. Here, in the wide commotion, a beast
sent its murderous tusk through Ufens' armour
and flesh, carrying him shrieking through those
ranks of trampled men. Nor was Tadius' death
easier, the point of a persistent tusk boring bit
by bit through the breastplate whose many linen
folds defended his body, then the elephant swung
the unwounded man on high, his shield clanging.
But brave Tadius, faced with this novel form of
danger, calmly turned it to good account, stabbing
the monster as he neared its forehead in both eyes
with swift thrusts from his blade. Maddened by
the deep wounds, the beast reared on its hind legs,
rising till it threw its heavy turret to the ground
behind. Pitiful it was to see that blind creature,
with all its armed men, crash suddenly to earth!

BOOK IX:599-619 THE ELEPHANTS ESCAPE TO THE RIVER

The Roman general ordered his soldiers to hurl
burning brands at the warring beasts, and shower
the defensive turrets they carried with torches of
smoking sulphur. They obeyed swiftly, and fumes
and tongues of flames rose from the beasts' backs;
fed by the roaring wind, fire devoured the turrets;

just as, when shepherds burn the grass on Pindus
and Rhodope, a fierce blaze grips the woodland,
the leafy heights burn, and suddenly the leaping
flames flare out along the whole ridge. Scorched
by hot pitch the elephants ran amok, trampling
a path through the ranks. None showed courage
enough to close with them, only daring to attack
from afar, with javelins and showers of arrows.
Maddened by the heat and pain the huge beasts
scattered fire high and low, until they plunged
at last headlong into the flowing river nearby,
but deceived by the shallowness of its waters
which had overrun the level plain, they carried
the flames far along the banks, in their course,
till finally the depth being enough to hide their
monstrous bodies, they sank beneath the surface.

BOOK IX:620-643 PAULLUS TAUNTS VARRO

But while battle was given, before the African
beasts were in flames, the Romans surrounded
them then attacked them from a distance with
javelins, stones and slings, like men besieging
a fortress, or attacking a camp on high ground.
Mincius showed bravery worthy of a soldier
and deserving of a better fate: he approached,
with drawn sword but his attempt miscarried,
as the monster, trumpeting, breathing hot and
hard, angrily wound its trunk round him then
raised him, brandished his body in that fatal
grasp, tossed him high in the air, and dashed
him, limbs crushed, pitifully, to the ground.
Amidst the fray, Paullus caught sight of Varro,
in the field, and taunted him: ‘Why do we not
close with Hannibal, we who promised Rome
he would walk with the chains round his neck,
before your triumphal chariot? Alas, for Italy!
Alas, for a foolish people granting the wrong

man their trust! Now they are suffering so, let
them decide whether they should have prayed
more dearly for Hannibal or Varro never to have
been born! As Paullus spoke, Hannibal charged
the fleeing Romans, as behind them the spears
of Carthage flew, and Paullus' helm and shield
were struck as he watched, though the consul
only rushed then more fiercely against the foe.

BOOK IX:644-657 VARRO FLIES THE FIELD

When Paullus left him for the distant battle,
Varro was stunned, and wheeling his horse
cried: 'Rome, it seems you are punished now
for granting me command while Fabius lives.
What thoughts though are these, has destiny
gone awry? Is this a hidden plan of the Fates?
I would end my life and all instantly but some
god halts the blow, and holds something other
for me in store. Shall I live to bear the consul's
rods, broken, stained with my fellow-citizens'
blood, back to my land? Must I show my face,
through all the towns of Italy, in their anger?
Shall I, a fugitive from battle, see you, Rome,
once more, though Hannibal himself could
scarcely wish a crueller fate on me?' But all
further protest was cut short, at the approach
of the enemy forces, as his war-horse, with
loosened rein, bore him swiftly from the field.

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BOOK X:1-30 PAULLUS FIGHTS ON

Paullus, seeing that the enemy was gaining
ground rushed into danger, courting death
from every blade, at the heart of the action,
just as a wild creature will charge at a ring
of surrounding spears, drawing its attackers
near, at the risk of being wounded. He cried
to his men in a terrifying voice: 'Stand firm,
I beg of you, and accept your wounds in front,
bear none inflicted from behind to the depths!
Nothing is left us but a glorious death. Watch
as I lead you still, in descending to the shades.'
Then he moved more swiftly than Thessalian
Boreas, or the arrows fired by the Parthian in
retreating. He ran to where Cato, filled with
the spirit of war, unmindful of his few years,
was fighting; drove at the enemy as Cato was
attacked by nimble Vascones and Cantabrians,
by a mass of spears, snatching him from death.
The assailants retreated in fear as a hunter will,
who, happily chasing the deer in some far-off
valley, following hard as it wearies expecting
to take it, suddenly meets a fierce lion, exiting
its den gnashing its teeth in plain sight, and as
he pales, blood ebbing from his face, he drops
his idle weapon, no longer heeding the quarry.
Now Paullus thrust at those nearby who held
their ground, now hurled missiles at cowards
who had turned their backs in fright. He found
joy in rage, in frenzy, glorying in his efforts:
a host of nameless foes fell to that lone sword,
and if only a second Paullus had been granted
the Roman army, Cannae's name had perished.

BOOK X:31-58 JUNO SEEKS TO DISSUADE PAULLUS

Finally, the Roman wing broke in disorder, and
the front rank scattered in full retreat. Labienus,
Ocres and Opiter fell, the two latter from Sezze's
vine-clad hills, Labienus from rocky Cingoli's high
walls. The Carthaginians killed them at the same
moment but in different ways. Labienus was struck
through the body with a spear, while of the brothers
one was wounded in the shoulder the other the thigh.
Maecenas was killed by a javelin piercing the groin,
he whose name was celebrated in Etruria, where his
ancestors were kings. Paullus, meanwhile, scornful
of life, pushed through the midst of the fray, seeking
Hannibal; dreading this fate alone, to leave the man
alive. But Juno, fearing Hannibal's strength (since,
if they duelled, such storm and fury must prevail),
took on the likeness of Metellus, a coward, asking:
'Paullus, our consul, on whom Rome depends, why
defy fate? Why rage on to no end? Rome will stand
if Paullus survives; without him, Italy is dragged
to her doom. Do you intend to face Hannibal in
his might, rob us of our leader in the moment of
disaster? Joying in war, Hannibal now would dare
to face the Thunderer himself. Already Varro turns
his mount (I saw him flick the rein) and escapes to
preserve himself for better times. Let destiny work,
and save yourself from death, who matter more than
us; you will meet with further fighting soon enough.'

BOOK X:59-91 PAULLUS REPROACHES THE DISGUISED GODDESS

Paullus sighed at this: 'Here's cause enough to seek
death in battle, hearing such monstrous counsel from
a Metellus? Go, you fool, go, take flight. I pray no
enemy weapon strikes you from behind: untouched,
unscathed depart, enter Rome's gates beside Varro!

Worst of cowards, think you life on such terms is worth living, or that I am unequal to a noble death? Hannibal rages indeed, with courage to brave Jove himself, yet you are far from your ancestors' great virtues! What other fight should I seek, what other enemy than one who will render me forever famous.' Uttering such reproaches, Paullus sought the centre of the fray, and killed Acherras, who, slower of foot, was retreating to where his own comrades were most numerous, stealing a way through the close-packed ranks and their hedge of shields. So a Belgian hound tracks a wild boar he cannot see, not giving tongue, but, following the beast's scent unerringly as it runs over hill and dale, covering those unknown glades none have hunted before, and never stops pursuing the scent taken till he finds its lair deep in the thorns. Meanwhile, Juno changed her appearance yet again, since, her words proving ineffectual, Paullus would not quit the fray. She took on the likeness of a Moor, Gelesta, and calling Hannibal from the heat of battle, in that disguise, cried: 'O eternal glory of Carthage, we implore you to turn this way, spear in hand, for Paullus fights fiercely on the bank of that swollen river, and no other death but his can bring you greater fame.' So saying she bore him to a far part of the field.

BOOK X:92-121 THE DEATH OF CRISTA

A warrior named Crista, was harassing the Libyan foe on the raised bank of the river, with his six sons fighting round him. The family were poor but not unknown to the men of Todi, Crista himself being noted throughout Umbria for warlike deeds, and he had armed all his sons and taught them how to fight. Now this band of brothers, led by their staunch father, after killing enemies enough, had felled a turreted elephant, with innumerable blows. They followed with firebrands and were watching with joy as the turret burned, when they saw a helmet flash,

plumes flickering brightly on high. The old man (who
knew Hannibal from the light they shed) without delay
urged his band of sons on into the fierce fray, ordering
them to hurl their weapons as one, and to disregard
Hannibal's shining helm and fiery temper. So the eagle,
Jupiter's bird, who raises her young in the nest to be
bearers of his lightning-bolts, sets her eaglets to eye
the sun, proving their true descent by Phoebus' rays.
Now Crista sought to lead by example as imminent
conflict loomed: behold his spear speeding swiftly
through the space between. But the point could not
pierce the multi-layered gilded breastplate; the shaft
hung loose, the failed blow revealing the thrower's
waning powers. Then, Hannibal challenged Crista:
'What foolishness leads you to strike so idly, with
that enfeebled hand? Your hesitant throw barely
marked this armour that shines with Galician gold.
See, I return the weapon! Your sons I note should
rather take me as their master in war.' With that,
Hannibal's spear pierced poor Crista in the chest.

BOOK X:122-169 HANNIBAL SEEKS TO KILL CRISTA'S SIX SONS

Now six javelins, hurled by those sons of Crista
wondrous sight, flew at Hannibal; six spears were
hurled with equal force. So, when the Libyan Moors
besiege a lioness, driven hard by the hunt, in her den,
her cubs take up the fight, fierce but doomed to fail,
their jaws proving too weak and immature. Hannibal
thus parried the javelins with his shield, then drew
behind it to receive the crashing blows of the spears.
Not sated by his previous wounding and slaughter,
he now breathed deep in anger, seeking to kill all
six, and leave their corpses at their father's side,
destroying the wretched family, root and branch.
Now he spoke to Abaris, his squire, who shared
his warlike stance, and was ever his companion
in the fight: 'Supply me with weapons. This band

of brothers that strike at my shield are keen to go
down to Avernus' dark waters, now let them reap
the reward of their ill-judged piety.' So saying he
pierced the eldest, Lucas, with a javelin; the point
sank deep and the lad fell face upwards against his
brothers' shields. The next to die was Volso, who
sought to extract that fatal steel, Hannibal striking
his face through the shield with a Roman spear he
plucked from a pile of corpses. And then Vesulus,
his foot slipping in his brothers' hot blood, his
head severed by a swift sword-stroke; and now,
(oh, the barbarity of war!) Hannibal throws helm
and head together as a weapon at the retreating
backs of those left. Now Telesinus fell prostrate,
struck to the marrow where the backbone knits
the body; seeing, as he breathed his last and his
eyes, swimming, failed, his brother Quercens
stunned by a bullet hurled from a distant sling.
Hannibal now stabbed Perusinus with a stake
his squire snatched from the back of a downed
elephant and handed him, striking this last man
above the groin as Perusinus staggered towards
him, slowing in his course, attacked by grief and
fear, but not lacking courage. The fierce thrust
from that scorched shaft brought him down. He
sought, with pleas, to appease Hannibal's fierce
wrath, but the fatal heat of the smouldering stake
filled his open mouth and lungs with fiery breath.
So all the sons of Crista fell with him, he whose
name was long known in Umbria, as a tall oak
will crash to ruin, one planted centuries ago by
our forefathers, falling to Jove's lightning-bolt,
sending up sulphurous smoke and flame to play
havoc among boughs revered through the ages,
yet conquered now by the god, its huge trunk
in falling bringing down its scions all around.

BOOK X:170-184 PAULLUS CONTINUES THE BATTLE

With Hannibal in action by the Aufidus' stream,
Paullus marked his own imminent death, killing
many, fighting like the victor of a thousand foes.
Great Phorcys, from Gibraltar's caves sacred to
Hercules, fell then, the Gorgon's head embossed
on his shield, the cruel goddess originating there.
Phorcys pressed on, proud of his ancient descent
from Medusa, she who turned the living to stone.
As he aimed a violent blow at Paullus' left thigh,
the consul, grasping the tall crest of Phorcys helm,
deflected the blow, then threw him to the ground
piercing him from above, with his sword, where
his belt clasped round the spine protected the hips.
A stream of hot blood now poured from the gaping
viscera, as he who lived not far from Atlas' realm
now died on Diomede's field. With sudden alarm,
in the midst of the fray, troops trained by Hannibal
that master of war for this very purpose, achieved
a surprise attack. They had surrendered, feigning
desertion from the Punic army, but re-armed in
deceit, now rushing en masse against the Roman
rear, minds intent on slaughter. Lacking neither
swords nor spears, they snatched weapons from
the dead. Galba saw a warrior seize the distant
standard, then carry it away, yet the prospect
of danger never robs a hero of desire for glory,
and, exerting all his strength, he caught the man
and dealt the death blow before he could escape.
Yet as he gripped the prize and wrenched it from
the tight grasp of the dying foe, Amorgus swiftly
approached and ran him through, so Galba fell,
thwarted in his great deed. Meanwhile, as though
Enyo, the cruel goddess of war, had not yet sated
her savage anger, Vulturnus stirred the surface of
the field to clouds of dust, driving burning sand
in all directions, the tempest he raised howling
terribly, driving men's flailing bodies far away,

to the limits of the plain, hurling them against
the carved-out river banks, plunging them deep
in the swollen flow. So died the ill-fated Curio,
Aufidus ending his life with a nameless death,
for, while he tried to halt the terrified men, his
body placed in their path, he, in furious anger,
was driven forward by the weight of fugitives;
swallowed by the turbulent flow, he sank down
to the sandy river-bed, and lying there, in those
Adriatic depths, lacked all recognition in dying.

BOOK X:185-259 HANNIBAL RIDES AT PAULLUS

Paullus, strong in adversity, incapable of bowing
his neck to fate, attacked the all-conquering foe
head on, inspired, now, only by his longing for
a soldier's death, and the certainty of being slain.
Then Viriathus, brave king of an Iberian domain,
driving a Roman, wearied by battle, before him,
killed him under the consul's eyes and close by.
Alas, the sadness and the tears! It was Servilius,
a consul at Trasimene, finest of warriors, finest,
that is, after Paullus, who was now felled by that
barbarian sword, his death alone adding a stain
to the crime of Cannae. Paullus could not contain
his wild anger. Though the mad fury of the wind
betrayed him, and cloaked the daylight with dust,
he broke through the dark cloud of blowing sand,
and pushed on, attacking Viriathus, who after his
Iberian fashion was singing a savage victory song
while striking his shield, then pierced the heart in
his chest. But this proved Paullus' last victim, his
final effort, doomed as he was to war no longer,
nor profit you, Rome, in the great fight to come.
A huge stone, a vast weight hefted by unknown
hands, struck him full on, driving fragments of
his bronze helm into the bone, masking his face
with blood. Paullus drew back, then rested his

failing body against a nearby rock, and gasping
through the streaming flow, collapsed onto his
shield, formidable despite his wound. So a great
lion in the arena will shake off the lighter spears,
but with the sword about to plunge into its chest,
will wait at the centre, quivering but resigned to
the blow: blood streams from its nostrils, jaws,
and down its mane, and it utters now and then
a dull roar, spitting foam from its open mouth.
Now the Libyans rushed on Paullus, Hannibal
himself galloping as the wind drove, down
the path that his sword, his charger, his tusked
monsters had cleared. Yet Piso, buried beneath
a heap of weapons, seeing Hannibal riding over
the dead, propped himself by his efforts on his
lance, and stabbed the horse's belly using that
raised blade. As the beast fell he tried to mount,
but though Hannibal had been thrown as his
charger went sprawling, he picked himself up in
an instant, crying: 'Do the Roman corpses rise
again to fight a second time? Can they not rest
even in death?' With this, as Piso tried to raise
his wounded limbs once more, he rose to his full
height and plunged his sword in as far as the hilt.

BOOK X:260-308 THE DEATH OF PAULLUS

See now, Lentulus, struck in the foot by a Cretan
arrow and about to gallop from the field, beheld
Paullus resting against that rock now wet with his
blood, glaring fiercely as he lapsed towards death.
Lentulus, ashamed to flee, abandoned his purpose,
seeming then to see Rome burning, blood-stained
Hannibal at her gates, seeing as if for the first time,
there, that Aetolian plain, now the grave of Italy.
'Paullus,' he cried, 'if you abandon our vessel to
this storm, what prevents a Carthaginian march
on Rome tomorrow? I swear, by Heaven (and if

my words sound harsh, well, grief prompts them)
that unless you grasp the helm in this deadly war,
and survive the tempest despite your wishes, you
Paullus will bear a greater guilt even than Varro.
Sole hope of our suffering nation, take my horse
I beg you: I myself will bear your weakened body
on my shoulders, seat you securely in the saddle.'
Paullus, spitting blood from his mutilated mouth,
replied: 'Oh, by the courage of our ancestors, well
said! Hope is not lost if such brave hearts as yours
still remain to Romulus' realm. Spur your mount,
as hard as your wound allows, bid them go close
the city gates at once: destruction is upon them.
Tell them, pray, that Fabius must hold the reins.
It was madness to resist the warnings. What more
is left in life for me to do but prove to the blind
masses that Paullus knows how to die? Shall I
be carried back to Rome, wounded and dying?
What would Hannibal not give to see me retreat?
I am not made of such, nor will my spirit go so
tamely to the shades below. I, who once – but
why let my failing speech detain you Lentulus
in idle complaint? Go, urge your weary mount
from here at spear-point!' So Lentulus headed
for Rome, bearing his weighty message; while
Paullus summoned whatever remained of life;
as a tiger, mortally wounded, falls back at last,
and, crouching down, struggles against death,
opening its feeble jaws to bite in vain, while,
unable to satisfy its rage, the tip of its tongue
licks at the spear-blades. Now Iertas neared,
brandishing his weapon in triumph, and yet
Paulus suddenly rose and plunged his sword
deep in the foe. Then he gazed round seeking
Hannibal, ready to yield his life, a warrior's
life, to that glorious hand. But he was struck
by a host of missiles launched by every foe,
Numidians, Garamantians, Gauls, Asturians,
and Moors. So Paullus died. A noble heart,

a mighty arm were lost, in one who, had he
been granted sole command of things, might
have equalled Fabius, while his honourable
death only added fresh glory to his country,
and set a brave man's name among the stars.

BOOK X:309-325 THE FIELD OF CANNAE AFTER THE BATTLE

All the hopes and courage of the Romans lost
with their consul, the army like a headless body
fell to the next fierce assault, and Africa raged,
victorious, over the field. Here lay the soldiers
of Picenum, the brave Umbrians; there Sicilians
and Hernici. Standards that warlike Samnites,
or those from beside the Sarno, or the Marsian
companies had borne, lay all around; battered
armour and helmets; useless swords; shields
shattered by enemy shields; and the foam-wet
bits torn from the mouths of maddened steeds.
The crimson Aufidus spewed swollen waters
over the plain, returning corpses to the shores
that owned them, in its rage. So an Egyptian
vessel, once proud as an island on the deep,
now, dashed on a reef, covers the sea around
with its scattered wreckage; floating amongst
the waves are benches, masts with torn flags
and sails, and wretched sailors vomiting brine.

BOOK X:326-371 JUNO SENDS HANNIBAL A WARNING

Hannibal having spent the whole day in hard-fought
battle, amid savage slaughter, once darkness had hid
the light of his glory, ceased the conflict, and finally
ordered his men from the destruction. But anxious
and alert he resented night's inaction. It stung him,
that although the gods had granted him so much,
he had not yet reached the gates of Rome, his goal.

The next day he intended to march there, while his soldiers' blood was hot, their weapons still drawn, their hands yet stained with slaughter, and, entering Rome's walls by force and fire, set the Capitol alight, to follow Cannae. Now Juno, Saturn's daughter, was troubled by this aim, knowing Jupiter's displeasure and Italy's destiny, and so set out to curb Hannibal's rash ardour, his eager but futile hopes. She quickly summoned Sleep, lord of the silent shadows, with whose all-conquering aid she often closes Jupiter's eyes against his will. She spoke to Sleep, winningly; 'Divine One, I do not call you to any great task, your gentle wings are not here to place Jove in my power. Here are no thousand eyes to close, so deep darkness might steal Io, Inachus' daughter transformed to a heifer, from that guard who scorned your divinity. Simply, I pray, send a dream to this Carthaginian general so that he loses his desire to see the walls of Rome that are denied him; the Lord of Olympus will never allow him entry.' Swiftly, Sleep did as she ordered, winged his way through the shadows, carrying the juice of poppy-seed in a curved horn. He glided in silence, seeking out Hannibal's tent, then, waving the wings that bring drowsiness over that recumbent head, he dropped slumber into the eyes, and touched the brow with his Lethean wand. Now wild visions stirred Hannibal's troubled mind: he thought he crossed the Tiber with his great army and stood defiantly before the walls of Rome. Jove himself was there, a shining figure on the Tarpeian Rock, a hand uplifted to hurl down lightning-bolts, and the wide plain smoked with sulphurous fumes, while the chill waters of the blue Anio were shaken. Over and over the fierce fire flashed before his eyes, then a voice came from above: 'O warrior, you have won glory enough at Cannae: stay your march, for a Carthaginian may as easily storm heaven as force his way past the sacred walls of Rome.' Hannibal, stunned by his vision, now feared a more dreadful

battle to come, as Sleep left him, Juno's command
fulfilled, yet dawn unable to erase that vivid dream.

BOOK X:372-386 MAGO TRIES TO STIR HANNIBAL TO ACTION

Amidst troubled sleep and phantom visions, Mago
came to report that the remnants of the Roman army
had surrendered in the night, and he brought with him
a rich array of spoils. He swore that within five days
Hannibal might delight in a banquet on the Tarpeian
heights, but Hannibal, concealing the divine warning,
supressing his fears, gave the wounds and weariness
of his soldiers after their fierce battle, as an excuse,
and the danger of over-confidence. Mago protested,
as disappointed as if he had been ordered to retreat
from the very walls of Rome itself: 'So our great
labours have not defeated Rome, as she believes,
but only Varro? Why throw away Mars' rich gift
of fate, and hold back your nation? Let me lead
the cavalry onwards and, on my life, I promise
those Trojan walls will be yours, and the gates
will open, of their own accord, without a fight.'

BOOK X:387-414 THE ROMANS RALLY AT CANUSIUM

As Mago breathed fire, while his more cautious
brother doubted, the Romans had begun to rally
behind Canusium's walls, building a rampart
to house the army's remnants. How wretched
they seemed in defeat! Lacking the eagles and
the banners of a fighting force, the leadership
of a consul and the display of the lictors' axes!
Men, heart-sick, their bodies mutilated, fought
hard to support themselves on weakened limbs,
as if maimed by the fall of some great building.
Now a shout was heard, now silence fell, looks
downcast; most lacked armour, shields, blades

with which to fight; every horseman wounded;
all done with the honours and pride of warfare,
they tore the splendid plumes from their helms.
Their breastplates were holed by many a spear,
or by the arrows of the Moors left hanging there.
Meanwhile with sad cries they shout for their
lost comrades. Some weep for Galba, Piso, or
Curio, worthy of no mean death, others mourn
Scaevola, mighty in war. Many grieve for these,
but all as one at Paullus' fate, as if for their father,
saying how he never ceased to prophesy this evil,
resisting Varro's intent, seeking in vain to avert
the danger to Rome, yet still so brave in battle.
But anxious for survival, they hastened to dig
trenches along the city walls, and fortify their
gates with what materials they had. Then where
the ground was open, with nothing to obstruct
an enemy attack, they planted fire-hardened
branches, grown in shape like a stag's antlers,
points hidden, to impede the horses' progress.

BOOK X:415-448 SCIPIO PREVENTS DESERTION

Behold, adding to the incurable wound of defeat,
impious fear and greater madness gripped those
who had survived the battle and the Punic steel.
They planned to take sail and flee the country,
to escape the Libyan swords, the Carthaginian
army, and Hannibal. Metellus was the leader
of these deserters, a man who took no delight
in warfare, though whose family had won no
little fame. He won to his cause the cowardly
and degenerate, looking to find refuge in some
distant land where neither the name of Carthage,
nor news of their own lost country might reach.
Hearing of this, Scipio's anger was kindled. He
grasped his sword at once, as fierce a figure then
as when he confronted Hannibal in deadly battle,

and bursting open the doors rushed to enter that
place where they were hatching a plot bringing
ruin and disgrace on Italy. Then brandishing his
naked sword before their terrified faces, he cried:
'O Father Jove, who dwell in the Tarpeian shrine,
your chosen place after heaven; and Juno, Saturn's
daughter, unmoved as yet by our Roman suffering;
and you, Minerva, fierce virgin goddess, whose
breastplate is the aegis showing the dread Gorgon;
and all you gods of Italy, hear me when I swear,
by your divine power, and by the head of my own
heroic father, who is as a god to me, that of my will
I shall not abandon Rome, nor allow others so to do
while I live! Now Metellus, summon the gods to
witness that though Rome's walls blaze with Punic
fire, you will not dare to flee to any foreign land.
Refuse to swear, and Hannibal, who terrifies you
and troubles your sleep, is here in me and armed!
Die you shall, and none who kills a Carthaginian
shall win more glory.' His threats ended the plot;
and they now pledged their lives to their country
as ordered, swearing their oath before the gods
as he dictated, and so purged their hearts of guilt.

BOOK X:449-471 CLOELIUS AND HIS FAITHFUL HORSE

While the Romans, with anxious minds, were thus
involved, Hannibal surveyed the battlefield, and
the sad outcome of his savage acts of war, gazing
at the wounded; the numerous entourage about him
granted a sight welcome to those cruel Carthaginians.
Amongst the piles of dead lay Cloelius, his chest
pierced with spears, on the point of dying. Gasping
out a last breath, he could scarcely raise his bowed
head on his weakened neck. But his horse, throwing
Bagaesus its captor as it carried him over the field,
knew its master, pricking its ears, neighing loudly.
Galloping swiftly, it rose above mutilated corpses

and ground slippery with pools of blood, and halted by its stricken master's head. Then lowering its neck, dipping its shoulders, it bent its knees as it had been trained, to let its master mount, quivering with an affection all its own. None more skilful than Cloelius at riding that brave steed, reclining full-length on its back, or riding bareback and standing erect, as it sped over the course, covering the ground as if it had wings.

BOOK X:472-502 THE STORY OF CLOELIA

Hannibal was amazed at a horse displaying human feelings, asking the name and rank of the man who was struggling to find the darkness of death, while granting him a merciful release. Cinna answered, (believing Rome defeated he defected to Carthage, and now rode beside the victor): 'Brave general, his origins were not unworthy of note. She who rejects Carthaginian rule, Rome, was once ruled by kings; yet, under the rule of kings, resenting that of Tarquinius Superbus, she then expelled the tyrant. A great war commenced with the royal house of Clusium: you may have heard of Lars Porsena, of Horatius, and the Etruscan invasion. Porsena, supported by the wealth and power of Etruria, tried to restore the exiled king by war. They made many an effort without success; as the foreign tyrant pressed the Janiculum hard. With peace at last agreed and hostilities over, the war ended in a treaty, with hostages given as a pledge. But, by heaven, our Roman hearts could not be tamed, ready to face any danger for the sake of Italy's glory! Young Cloelia, not twelve years old, was sent with the other Roman virgins over the river to the king as a pledge of peace. Forget the courage of men, this girl escaped, bravely swimming the Tiber, despite the king, and his treaty, and her years,

her childish arms proving astonishingly true.
If nature had granted her a different gender,
Porsena might never have returned to those
Etruscan lands. But, not to draw out the tale,
this Cloelius was descended from that girl,
owing his glorious name to that rare lass.'

BOOK X:503-539 HANNIBAL'S MEN BUILD FUNERAL PYRES

While he told the tale, a sudden clamour rose,
not far away, to their left. The body of Paullus
had been dragged from the heart of a pile of
weapons and mutilated corpses. Alas, what
flesh is this? How changed from that Paullus
who not long since had ravaged the ranks of
Carthage, that Paullus who once conquered
the Illyrian Taulantes, and clapped their king
in irons. His grey hair was dark with dust, his
beard stained with blood, his teeth shattered
by that great blow from a stone, his whole
frame one massive wound. Hannibal's joy
redoubled at the sight. 'Run Varro, run now
and survive, run, so long as Paullus lies here!
Tell all the tale of Cannae, dear Consul, to
the Senate, the people, and the inert Fabius!
If you love life so much, Varro, once again
I grant you leave to run. But he who proved
a worthy enemy, his brave heart beating high,
shall be honoured with the rites and sepulchre.
How great you are in death, Paullus, whose
sole end grants me more joy than the fall
of thousands! When fate calls, I pray to die
such a death and that Carthage survive me.'
So he spoke, and ordered his warrior's bodies
to be buried the next day, when roseate Dawn
issued from her chamber, with piles of weapons
burned as a fiery offering to Mars. Though weary,
the men obeyed swiftly, felling the trees in all

the neighbouring woods, till the leafy glades
on the highest hills rang with the axes' sound.
Ash, and tall poplars with their pale leaves
were felled, struck by mighty blows, and ilex
planted by former generations. Down came
the oaks and shore-loving pines, cypresses
that deck the funeral procession, mournful
beside the flames. And lastly they built tall
funeral pyres, in sad and empty service to
the dead, till Phoebus's exhausted steeds
plunged in the western ocean and Titania's
moon-disk, departing from the sky, brought
on the darkening shadows of deepest night.

BOOK X:540-577 THE RITES PERFORMED FOR PAULLUS

Once the chariot of the sun blazed with dawn
fire and earth had regained its familiar colours,
they lit the funeral pyres and burnt the decaying
bodies of their dead on that hostile soil. They felt
a deep anxiety regarding the uncertain future; this
unspoken fear now gripping their inmost thought;
that, if the fortunes of war later worked against
them, they themselves must lie in hostile earth.
Then a vast mountain of armour was raised to
the sky, an offering to the war-god; Hannibal
himself holding a tall pine-branch, its needles
on fire, calling on the god to hear his prayer:
'I, Hannibal, victor over the Romans, set light
to these war-offerings, prime spoils of battle,
while a host of living men dedicate choicest
armour to you, Father Mars, whose ears are
not deaf to my prayer.' Then he hurled that
burning branch on the pyre, and the fierce
flames gripped the blazing heap, until its
fiery crest piercing the smoke rose through
the air, flooding the field with bright light.
Hannibal then went on to witness the rites

for Paullus, proud to show honour to his
dead foe. A tall funeral pyre was raised,
a bier was formed of soft green turf, and
offerings added worthy of the departed:
his shield, that sword, a terror to those
who knew it recently, the rods and axes,
proud insignia now shattered, captured
on the field. No wife or son was there,
no gathering of close kin, no masks
of ancestors as customary, carried on
high litters before the corpse to grace
the exequies. It was bare of trappings,
but Hannibal's praise alone granted
sufficient glory, who with sighs threw
a bright covering rich with purple dye,
and a gold-embroidered mantle over
the body, while uttering a last tribute:
'Go, pride of Italy, go where spirits
rightly go that delight in brave deeds.
Yours is the fame that glorious death
ensures, while Fate twines the thread
of my efforts, dictating my ignorance
of things to come.' So Hannibal spoke,
and at that instant, amidst the flames
crackling on all sides, Paullus' spirit
rose in triumph to the heavens above.

BOOK X:578-604 FABIUS ENCOURAGES THE CITIZENS OF ROME

The noise of rumour now filled the air,
and first found its way by land and sea
to Rome. The fearful citizens placed
sole trust in their citadel: no warriors
remained, Italy but an empty name.
They thought the enemy's delay in
breaking down the gates showed his
contempt. They already envisioned
their homes ablaze, temples ravaged,

their sons foully murdered, the smoke
rising from the seven hills. A single day
had seen the loss of two hundred great
leaders and their sixty thousand men,
leaving the walls of that emptied city
quaking; all this after Trebia and Lake
Trasimene; with equal losses among
our allies. Still the surviving senators
performed their duties and took up
the offices allotted. Fabius was quick
to show himself, speaking to the terrified
people: ‘There is no cause now for delay,
trust in me: man the walls, swiftly, before
the enemy dare attack. Cowardly inaction
nurtures ill-fortune, fear adds to adversity.
You youths, go quickly, strip the weapons
from the temples. Go, take those shields,
won in battle, from your walls, and leave
those bare. We are nation enough, so long
as none shy away in terror from the fight.
This fearful host may be formidable out on
the open plain, but the Moors, who delight
in swift action, will never shatter our walls.’

BOOK X:605-629 FABIUS PROTECTS VARRO

While Fabius roused hearts weak with fear,
the news that Varro was near spread widely
through the city, rendering all minds secretly
uneasy. Thus, if by chance a captain escapes
from shipwreck, and alone reaches the shore,
all are uncertain as to whether to celebrate
his survival or disown him, disliking the fact
that he has been saved while the rest are lost.
What shame clings to one who dares approach
the gates, a bird of ill-omen to their fearful city!
Fabius calmed the disquiet, saying that it was
wrong to show anger against a defeated general,

and quelling their indignation. Those, he said, who claim Mars as their ancestor should bear adversity, and hide their grief, and not seek solace for their loss by punishing others. ‘If I am allowed a word of reproof,’ he added, ‘then the day I saw Varro granted command was more painful than this on which I witness his return without an army.’ His words quelled the signs of menace, all experiencing a change of heart, saddened by Varro’s fate, reflecting that at least Carthage had failed to kill both consuls. So all the people came in a long procession to thank Varro, claiming to think his action noble in relying on the ancient power and pride of a city, Rome, in which he refused to despair.

BOOK X:630-658 ROME RALLIES

Nonetheless, Varro, unhappy at his failure and deeply ashamed, approached the walls of Rome with faltering steps and tear-filled eyes; raising his eyes to gaze at his native city troubled him, while renewing its grief. Though the Senate and people came to meet him on his return, he knew they were not there to praise him, rather each man demanded a son or brother lost, while sad mothers sought to lash out at the consul’s face. So his lictors kept their silence as he entered the city, he forgoing the mark of respect for his high office, as one which the gods had scorned. However, Fabius and the Senate set aside grief and turned to the task in hand. Slaves chosen for their courage were quickly armed; barracks were thrown open to them, pride yielding to the needs of the State. The leadership decided to control Rome’s fate by any means, arming even their servants in defence of the Capitol and the realm, and a freedom with honour.

They now replaced the purple-bordered robes
their sons wore with unaccustomed armour.
Boys clapped on a helmet and were told to
seek their manhood in slaughtering the foe.
And when the Senate were petitioned to
pay the ransom for the crowd of captive
Romans, on the favourable terms offered,
(many thousands supporting the petition)
they refused, to Hannibal's astonishment,
considering it worse than any crime for
a soldier to surrender; while sentence was
passed on men guilty of desertion, who
were banished to remote parts of Sicily
to serve there until the invader departed.
Such was Rome then; and if it was fated
that her character should alter, Carthage,
when you fell, would that you remained!

End of Book X of the Punica

BOOK XI

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BOOK XI:1-27 DEFECTIONS FROM ROME AFTER CANNAE

Now let me tell of those who defected to Hannibal
and the Carthaginians after Rome's signal disaster
on the Apulian plain: for none stay loyal for long
when Fortune proves fickle. Alas, all too ready to
take sides against the vulnerable, the states openly
vied in emulation to ally with Carthage, the treaty
breaker. The Samnites were the most eager to fuel
ancient feuds, and revive their hatred on occasion;
next the Bruttians, waverers whose late repentance
saved them from disaster; and then the treacherous
Apulians unreliable in war; the Hirpini also, restless
and indecisive, who had no reason to break the faith.
It was as if foul contagion spread plague everywhere.
From Campania, the towns of Atella and Calatia sent
soldiers to Hannibal's camp, fear prevailing over duty.
Taranto, proud and fickle, founded by Phalantus, also
threw off the Roman yoke. Lofty Crotone opened her
gates in friendship, as the scions of Myskelus learned
how to bow their necks to the barbarians from Africa.
A like madness gripped the Locrians. And that region
of low-lying coast, where Magna Graecia, with walls
the Argives built, borders the Ionian Sea, was drawn
by Libyan success, her victories in war, and swore to
serve in battle under the dread Carthaginians. So too
the boastful Celts, dwellers by the River Po, pursued
their ancient grievances against Rome in her distress,
and hastened, in full strength, to join the Punic enemy.

BOOK XI:28-54 CAPUA AND ITS CORRUPTION

While it might seem just for the Celts or the Boii to
resurrect their impious quarrels, who would believe
that Capuans would act as foolishly as the Senones,
and that the city of Trojan Capys would associate
itself with that barbarous leader of the Numidians?

Who would credit it now with the times so changed!
Yet luxury and idleness nurturing frantic debauchery,
their shameless behaviour, and an unworthy respect
for wealth and wealth alone, enervated the indolent
people of a city freed from the bonds of law. Their
atrocious pride, above all, brought about their fall.
Nor did they lack means to indulge their pleasures:
no people of Italy (for such was their good fortune)
possessed more gold and silver; even the men wore
robes dyed with Tyrian purple, their lavish banquets
began at noon, and dawn found them at their revels,
and their manner of living was stained by every vice.
Then their senators oppressed the people, the masses
united in hatred of the senate, and the clash of views
engendered sedition. Meanwhile the old, themselves
even more corrupt, outdid the headstrong foolishness
of the young. Men of humble birth and obscure origin
were not ashamed to expect and demand office over
others, grasping at the reins of the dying state. It was
their ancient custom too to enliven their feasts with
fights to the death, dreadful contests accompanying
their banquets, such that the combatants often fell
dead over the cups, while the tables streamed blood.

BOOK XI:55-121 CAPUA CHALLENGES ROMAN AUTHORITY

Pacuvius, whose name was not unknown to crime
added to the situation by cleverly turning the minds
of the citizens to the Carthaginian cause, urging that
they demand the very thing he knew Rome would
never grant, an equal share for Capua in the highest
offices of state, with the rods being held alternately.
And if the Romans refused them the mutual title to
the curule chair and their own set of axes, then one
who would seek revenge for that rejection, namely
Hannibal, was waiting nearby, and obvious to all.
They then elected envoys who hastened to carry
the message. Virrius was the leader, an eloquent

speaker but of obscure birth and second to none in rousing a mob. He set out the disloyal ravings of a foolish people to a full session of the Roman Senate, but even before the proposal had yet been considered, before his swelling rhetoric had filled his hearers' ears, a unanimous cry of angry refusal rose from the whole gathering, while each senator denounced him individually till the Curia shook with their competing voices. Then Torquatus rose, his severity of aspect rivalling that of his noble ancestor. 'Alas Capua, are you so thoughtless as to enter the city Romulus founded, bringing such proposals? A city that Hannibal and the forces of Carthage dare not attack, despite Cannae? Has the history of that envoy of the Latins who spoke the like on the Capitol never reached your ears? Without a word being said, never a voice raised, the man who offered so insolent a message was flung headlong from the doors of the temple, his body hurtling down with such force that he was shattered against the pitiless rocks. So he atoned for his insolence as Jupiter watched, and he paid the penalty of death for his impious words. I am a scion of the consul who expelled that orator from Jove's house, and defended the Capitol though unarmed!' Raging mad, and shaking his fist in the envoys' faces he prepared to repeat his ancestor's actions, and seeing him threatening to rise to actual violence, Fabius now spoke forcefully also: 'Shamelessness on a grand scale! Behold, one consul's seat stands empty, deprived of Paullus by war's tempest; which of you do you seek to set there? Whom do you propose to fill his place? Are you, Virrius, chosen now before all others blessed by the Senate, summoned yourself to don the purple robe equating you with Brutus, the first of all our consuls? Go, madman, go where you intend; let treacherous Carthage

grant you your consulship!' No sooner had
he done, than Claudius Marcellus, groaning,
unable to contain his anger, wild with fury,
exclaimed in wrath: 'Varro, our consul, are
you so stunned by the whirlwinds of war
that dull acceptance grips your mind and
you can endure these illusions of madmen?
Will you not drive them from the Curia
instantly, send them scurrying to the city
gates, and teach these perverted creatures
the power of a consul elected by Romans?
A drunken mob, doomed to perish, I warn
you: leave Rome swiftly! A general with
his army will grant you the answer you
deserve before your own walls, as fitting!
Then the House rose as one, threatening
the envoys loudly, while the Capuans left
at once, Virrius, with the name of Hannibal
on his lips, roused to indignation by such a
fierce rebuff. Then Fulvius Flaccus (whose
foresight assured him of future glory, and
who saw Capua's ruin in his mind's eye)
cried: 'Never again shall you enter Quirinus'
sacred house, not even if you were to take
Hannibal captive and drag him here in chains.
Go then, I pray you, where all madness leads.'
The envoys returned in haste to Capua, with
these threats as the Senate's fierce response.

BOOK XI:122-154 VIRRIUS ROUSES THE CAPUANS TO DEFECT

(Almighty Jove, is it right to hide Capua's future
in total darkness? For a happier day will arrive
when Rome will duly appoint a consul born
in Capua, and bestow the rods long forcibly
withheld, freely and willingly, on the brave
descendants of her ancient foe. One penalty
for their ancestors' insolence shall remain in

place however, Capua will be inhibited from
sending voters to Rome before a new Carthage
does so.) But now, Virrius, cunningly mingling
truths and lies, proclaimed what the Roman
Senate had said and done, and sounded a fatal
note of bloody war before his troubled hearers.
The frenzied citizens demanded armour, arms
and Hannibal; and pouring in from every side
invited the Carthaginians to enter their city.
They praised young Hannibal's mighty deeds,
how he had crossed the Alpine passes, pierced
that mountain range that reached the sky, and
rivalled Hercules' glory; how he had blocked
the River Po with piles of corpses, then dyed
Lake Trasimene crimson with Roman blood;
had brought the Trebia eternal fame, and sent
the Roman generals, Paullus and Flaminius
to the shades. There was the earlier sacking
of Saguntum too, the transit of the Pyrenees
the crossing of the Ebro, and the sacrifices
his father had offered when he had sworn
the son to wage war on Rome. He alone, they
cried, had remained impervious to missiles
when so many generals had been killed, or
routed. 'Shall Capua,' they asked, 'when
a gift of the gods allows us to join forces
with this hero, in alliance, shall she indeed
endure the disdain and the casual insolence
of a weakened nation, and be ruled by a state
that denies us rods of consulship and equal
rights, as if we were slaves? Indeed, Rome
considers Varro worthier of a consul's title,
that the purple robe might glorify his flight!'

BOOK XI:155-189 DECIUS OPPOSES THE DEFECTION

Ranting like this, they prepared to send envoys,
selected by lot, to forge alliance with Carthage.

But Decius Magius, Capua's only glory at that
moment, undaunted, was true to his brave heart.
Admitted to the assembly, his entry unavoidable,
he spoke as follows; 'Citizens, will you violate
our fathers' treaties, joining in friendship with
one whom the gods condemn as an oath-breaker?
How you have strayed from the path of loyalty!
It is thought a great thing among great nations
and great men to keep the faith in adverse times.
Now is the time to fight alongside Rome, now
is the time for our army to raise the standards,
while all is perilous and her wounds beg relief.
This is the time for aid, when good fortune is in
abeyance, and stern Fortune calls on us to assist.
It is scarcely honourable to noble minds to court
favour only from success. Support Rome. I know
those godlike hearts and minds will never yield
to disaster: they can, I believe, endure Cannae
and Lake Trasimene and Paullus' noble death.
They it was who drove the enemy from our city
to save Capua from Samnite tyranny. They it
was, who when that threat was over, granted
our rights, and ended the First Samnite War.
Who are these allies you would gain? What of
those you would lose? Am I, of Trojan blood,
I, to whom our founder Capys, kin to mighty
Iulus, bequeathed the sacred rites and a name
derived from Jove, to join with barely human
Nasimonians, and Garamantians as cruel and
savage as wild beasts, and pitch a tent among
the Marmaricans? Must I accept as leader one
whose sword replaces justice and sworn oaths,
whose whole praise derives from bloodshed?
Decius does not so confuse right and wrong
as to be capable of such an action. Nature is
not so grudging as to deny us her great gift,
that the gates of death stand ever open: we
have the power to leave a life of dishonour.'
Such his speech, though falling on deaf ears.

BOOK XI:190-224 HANNIBAL ENTERS CAPUA (216BC)

For the group of elected envoys forged a treaty
with Hannibal. He sent a large force of Autololes
forward, who arrived to great noise and confusion;
he himself travelling swiftly over the plain with
the main body. Decius cried: 'Now, citizens, now
is the hour and the moment; rally to me while my
avenging arm delivers an action worthy of Capua
and myself as leader: lay these barbarians low. Let
each be eager to grasp glory for himself. If he tries
to enter, block the gate with our dead, and purge
our error with the sword; such bloody work alone
can cleanse hearts stained with guilt.' He spoke in
vain, none welcoming his speech, while Hannibal
heard of his hostile words and desperate intention.
Mind filled with anger, Hannibal ordered a select
band of men to bring the obstinate Decius to him,
at his camp outside the walls. There, unyielding
and unmoved, stood naked virtue, a breast filled
with loyalty and love of justice, greater than all
Capua; and, frowning at the general's menaces,
he even attacked him with bitter words. Then
Hannibal, shouting loudly, rebuked this Capuan
who defied all those Punic swords and standards:
'Now, after Paullus and Flaminius, it seems I am
opposed by Decius the madman who wishes to
fight with me and find honour and glory in death.
Grasp the standards, captains, advance swiftly!
Let us see whether Capua defies him and opens
her gates to me, as the Alpine passes opened
at the start of our campaign, whose cliffs reach
the sky, and which only Hercules trod before.'
His face suffused with blood, his remaining
eye glowed with fiery anger, his lips foamed,
and the gasping breath from his lungs showed
the ominous fury within. So he entered Capua,
accompanied by the senators and by a crowd
of citizens rushing to gaze on the general's face,
while Hannibal stormed and vented his anger.

BOOK XI:225-258 DECIUS IS SENT OFF TO CARTHAGE

Yet Decius' spirit was roused by imminent risk,
and he saw the time had come when unarmed he
might win more glory than this unbeaten general.
He made no attempt to escape, nor hide behind
locked doors, but lived in an openly fearless way,
as freely as if Hannibal had never entered the city,
until a fierce band of soldiers seized him and set
him before the seated Hannibal, who thundered
at him in an angry speech from his high throne:
'Do you alone intend to prop up that falling city
and call Rome back from the dead? O madman!
Is it you who will snatch from me such a gift of
the gods? Did they preserve me to be conquered
by useless Decius, by Decius the coward, weaker
than any woman born on our Carthaginian shore?
Why should I bear insult? Go, my men, wrap this
hero in the chains he merits.' So he spoke and his
stream of abuse continued. So the lion roars in
triumphant rage as he springs among the cattle
and grips one by the neck, driving in his claws
so as to leverage his great weight, biting at that
panting creature, as he hangs from its shoulder.
Yet, as they chained him, Decius, cried: 'Do it
and swiftly (what is more fitting to celebrate
Hannibal's entry): show the true value of this
sad alliance! Decius will make a fine victim,
it would scarcely be right to placate one who
delights in human blood with the usual oxen.
Is this friendship? Is this alliance? He has not
even entered senate-house or temple as yet,
but already this eager tyrant seeks to fill our
prison-cells. Come, follow a fine beginning
with more such deeds! Among the shades, I
shall hear news of you lost in Capua's ruin!'
No more words were allowed. His head was
covered with a black cloth while he, defiant,
was dragged away, the Capuans looking on.

BOOK XI:259-287 HANNIBAL IS FETED IN CAPUA

Now the exultant general's heart was at last
at peace, and he turned his delighted gaze,
serenely, towards the city roofs and temples,
asking a host of things: who founded Capua;
how many men might arm; how much coin
in silver or bronze was available for the war;
how skilled were their horsemen, and lastly
the numbers comprising their current infantry.
They pointed out their lofty citadel, and spoke
of the Stellatian plain and of its rich harvests.
Meanwhile Phoebus was steering his weary
steeds down the sky to their goal, as Hesperus
gradually infused his swift path with shadow.
The Capuans celebrated their customary feast,
at tables with regal fare, throughout the city.
Hannibal himself, adorned like a god, treated
with divine respect, and clothed in resplendent
purple was seated in the place of high honour.
Various companies served him; some serving
the food, some tending the fires, some pouring
wine in due order, with others carrying dishes.
Heavy gold cups, chased in relief in ancient
times, gleamed on the tables. Flames dispelled
the dark, the high vault hummed with the noise
of movement, and the Carthaginian warriors,
unused to such banqueting, drank in those
unknown splendours with astonished gaze.
Hannibal himself stayed silent while eating,
disdaining the feast's excess and the horde
of servants ministering to the loaded tables;
until, his appetite satisfied, Bacchus' gift
had softened his harsh mood: then he looked
more cheerful, laying aside his heaviest cares.

BOOK XI:288-302 TEUTHRAS SINGS THE ORIGIN OF CAPUA'S NAME

Teuthras of Cumae played on the Euboean lyre;
his singing charmed ears used to the harsh blare
of the fierce war-trumpet. For he sang of Chaos,
of the dark starless mass of a world where dawn
never broke, a world without light. Then he told
how a god had parted the deep expanse of water
and located the mass of land at its very centre,
and granted the gods high Olympus to dwell in.
He sang of the chaste centuries of Father Saturn,
then of Jupiter who delighted in furtive amours
and his union with Atlas' daughter Electra, who
bore him Dardanus, a worthy son of the divine,
who in turn gave Jove a grandson, Ericthonius
of high descent; of the long succession through
Tros, and Ilus, to Assaracus and Capys, second
to none in deeds of glory; and so of how Capys
bequeathed his name to Capua. All the citizens
applauded, as did all the Carthaginian warriors.
Hannibal was first to pour out a solemn libation
in honour of the name, the rest of the audience
following, drenching the tables before them, in
the usual fashion, and growing heated with wine.

BOOK XI:303-350 PEROLLA PROPOSES TO FIGHT HANNIBAL

So the Carthaginians, gathered there, took pleasure
in the feast, but I must tell of a Capuan youth (for
I cannot ignore your aims, Perolla, and must speak
of that plan, which though imperfect, showed your
noble character). Not disarmed by the wine's potency,
indeed unaffected by drink, he silently contemplated
the virtuous idea of fighting Hannibal and killing him.
More admirable still, he was Pacuvius' son but had
rejected his father's treachery. When his father left
the feast, being sated by its many courses, and went

slowly from the room, Perolla followed, and reaching
a quiet place at the rear of the hall, where he could
reveal his intent, and bold design, he said: ‘Listen
to something worthy of Capua and our family,’ then
drew back his robe to show the sword at his side. ‘I
intend to end the war thus, sever Hannibal’s head
and carry it to the Capitol in triumph. This sword
will sanctify an alliance that treachery has stained.
If your old eyes cannot bear to watch, if you shrink
from an act too daring for your declining years, then
hold to the safety of your house, let me perform it.
You think Hannibal great, ranked equal to the gods,
but oh how much greater your son’s fame will prove
than this Punic chieftain’s!’ His eyes darted fire, and
already in his mind he struck the blow, but his father
who could scarcely bear to hear of so dreadful a plan,
at once fell to the ground trembling, kissing his son’s
feet in terror again and again. ‘By the life left in me,’
he cried: ‘by a father’s right, and by your life, dearer
my son than my own, I beg you to abandon your plan,
lest a guest’s table be defiled, the wine-cups steeped
in blood, and all the feast destroyed by a deadly duel.
Can you defeat a man whom no city-wall or army has
withstood as yet, facing that stern brow and fiery gaze?
Can you survive the lightning flashing from those eyes,
when the sight of your sword summons that fierce cry
that routs whole armies in the field? If you think that
while feasting he is disarmed, think again: he is armed
with immortal glory won by endless war and slaughter.
If you face him, Cannae, Trebia, the dead of Trasimene,
the mighty shade of Paullus will rise up before your eyes.
What? Will his officers and fellow guests who sit feasting
not defend him in that event? Forgo your purpose, I beg
of you, abandon a design that you cannot survive whole.
Do not Decius’ cruel chains teach you to calm yourself?’

BOOK XI:351-368 HIS FATHER PACUVIUS DISSUADES HIM

So Pacuvius spoke, but, seeing his son still on fire with the desire for glory and deaf to the risk, he cried: ‘I will beg no more, so return to the feast, let us hasten, it is my throat now you must pierce with your blade, not those of the Carthaginians who fight to protect their general. If you seek to attack Hannibal, then you must drive your sword through my entrails. Do not scorn my old age, I will interpose my body and by dying wrest from your hand that blade you refuse to sheath.’ And his tears fell profusely: thus heaven’s high design reserved Hannibal for Scipio and war; nor would fate grant so great a deed to a foreign hand. Finest of men in his wrath, and worthy of achieving his great purpose, yet what glory Perolla lost by abandoning his plan, so noble in its intent! Yet both hurried back to their seats, smoothed their troubled brows, till sleep dissolved the company’s happy feast.

BOOK XI:369-384 DECIUS FINDS SANCTUARY

Now Hannibal was at work almost before day sought to reveal Phaethon’s steeds, the sun’s chariot gleaming as it rose through the waves. He ordered proud Mago to return to the Carthaginian citadel, and report their general’s actions to the senate. All the spoils stripped from the dead in the fierce war, and chosen prisoners went too, as offerings to the gods for success in battle. Alas, Decius was another of Hannibal’s concerns, also sent to Carthage, to be held till the general returned and could sate his wrath, but Jupiter on high took pity on his undeserved sufferings and diverted his vessel to Cyrene, the ancient city of Battus. Then Ptolemy, the Macedonian Pharaoh of Egypt, saved him from the menace of his captors, freeing him of his chains. Not long after, that same land, which saved his life, received his bones, to rest inviolate in a quiet grave.

BOOK XI:385-409 VENUS INSTRUCTS HER CUPIDS

Meanwhile Venus seized this welcome opportunity
to destroy the Carthaginians' discipline through
insidious excess, in debauchery taming their wild
hearts. She told her Cupids to shoot their deceitful
arrows at random, stirring unseen fires in them all.
Then, smiling sweetly, told the lads: 'Juno full of
her victories may despise us (no wonder, for who
are we to her): her power is great, her arm strong,
while we launch our tentative shafts from childish
bows, and no blood escapes the wounds they deal.
But pray, my little band, begin; now is the moment
for you to help me, and inflame the Carthaginians
with your hidden darts. You must seduce an army,
with amorousness and too much wine and slumber,
that neither the sword nor flame nor war's free rein
could shatter. Let luxury win Hannibal's heart by
stealth; let him feel no shame at lying full length
on some embroidered couch, nor refuse to drench
his hair in Assyrian perfume. Let one who boasted
of sleeping beneath the wintry sky, prefer to spend
his nights under a warm roof; and let that warrior
who, fully armed, ate on horseback as he galloped,
now yield his unwarlike days to the god of wine.
Then, full of drink after the feasting, let him joy
in the lyre, and pass his nights in drowsy sleep
or spend them, wakefully, subject to my powers.'

BOOK XI:410-439 HANNIBAL AND HIS MEN ARE SEDUCED BY LUXURY

Once Venus had ended, her playful band flexed
their snowy wings and flew down from the sky.
Each Moorish warrior felt the fiery blow of their
arrows, as the shower of darts melted their hearts.
They called for delicacies, wine, and yet another
sweet song from the Pierian lyre. No fierce steed
now sweats on the open plain; no bared arm hurls

the lance afar. Drowsy with sleep, they bathe their limbs in baths of hot water, their valour sapped by insidious luxury. Hannibal himself, breathed upon by a deceiving Cupid, piles high the festive meats, and tastes again the hospitality of his willing hosts, until, jaded, he lapses from his inborn virtue, that mind poisoned by an unseen arrow. Capua is now his second home, equally honoured and called by him another Carthage, while that spirit which his victory left whole is ruined by vice's allurements. For the Capuans' lust and luxury knew no bounds; they embellished them by various means, strove to distinguish their feasts with performing arts, as Memphis on the Nile always echoes to its Phrygian flute, and equals Canopus in revelry. Now Teuthras, with voice and lyre, delighted Hannibal, filling his ears with sweet music, and, seeing the general marvel at the sounding strings, Teuthras began, gradually, to display the finest beauties of that Aonian instrument, and sang in harmony with the melody so that his voice surpassed the swan as it relinquishes its life. Here then was the tale out of many that he chose as most likely to disarm his audience:

BOOK XI:440-482 TEUTHRAS SINGS OF ORPHEUS AND OTHERS

'The natives of Greece heard the tortoise-shell resound long ago and, wonderful to tell, the lyre had power to draw stones and raise them of their own accord to form city walls. So Amphion built that wall round Thebes, summoning towers to rise, the stone lifting itself on high to the player's note. And Arion's lyre calmed the stormy sea, charmed the seals, and drew Proteus along, in all his forms, while Arion was borne upon the dolphin's back. Then the instrument Cheiron the Centaur loved shaped heroic minds, Achilles' spirit, in a cave

on Mount Pelion. When Cheiron struck the strings,
it also calmed the angry sea, the wrath of Avernus.
Yet the chords Orpheus played beside the Thracian
Strymon, worthy of heaven, being heard by gods
above and the shades below, shone bright among
the stars. Even his mother, Calliope, and all her
choir of sister Muses, marvelled at such music.
Neither Mount Pangaeus nor Haemus sacred to
Mars, nor the far bounds of Thrace remained
at rest, but trees, beasts, hills and mountains
followed him, while the wild birds forgot their
sweet nests, and, halting in mid-flight, hovered,
suspended in the unmoving air. Moreover when
the Argo would not take to the water, knowing
only land as yet, the sea, at Thessalian Pagasae,
summoned by his lyre obeyed the call and rose
to that sacred vessel's stern. And with that lyre
Orpheus charmed the dark kingdom, Acheron's
sounding flames, and halted Sisyphus' stone.
Oh the cruel madness of the wild Bacchantes,
the Ciconian and Getic women, and Rhodope
condemned by the gods! Hebrus now bore his
severed head to the sea, with banks laid bare.
Then as, still singing, it was swept along by
the rushing waters, all at once, sea-creatures
rose from the waves, and over all the deep
they leapt at the murmur of that voice.' So
Teuthras, devotee of Castalia and the Muses,
moved warriors' hard hearts with his music.

BOOK XI:483-541 MAGO REPORTS TO CARTHAGE

Meanwhile Mago had been carried to Libyan
shores by gentle breezes. Wreathed with laurel,
his vessel reached harbour, where the glittering
spoils on her high prow gleamed over the water.
Then the shouts of the sailors, which had long
echoed over the sea, filled the shore with sound;

while the oarsmen leaning smartly on their oars
made the sea foam with those hundred blades.
Not slow to show their joy, the populace waded
into the waves, the crowd, elated, hailing good
news with rapturous applause. Hannibal was
hailed to high heaven: the women on all sides,
the crowd of children, summoned to rejoice,
the aged, senate and people alike, celebrated
his worthiness for divine honours and for
the sacrifice of oxen. So Mago returned to
Carthage, entering the gates that rang to his
brother's fame. Then the Senate gathered in
haste, the House filling with a great throng.
Mago prayed to the gods in the manner of
his ancestors then said: 'I bring you news
of a mighty victory. That strength on which
Italy relied is broken, and I myself played no
small part. The gods favoured us in the battle.
There is a land, that is named after Aetolian
Diomede and long ago possessed by Daunus,
where the Aufidus runs swiftly over all those
moist plains, and spoils the harvest with its
flooding; later it meets the Adriatic waves
and thrusts the resounding waters seawards.
There Paullus, a name honoured in Latium,
and Varro, the Roman generals in the field,
advanced when the dark of night had scarce
dispersed, the far-off gleam of their weapons
adding a further brightness to the rising sun.
We marched swiftly from the camp to meet
them, my brother driven by a fierce desire
for battle. Earth shook and the heavens rang
with that encounter. Then our leader, without
rival in war, filled the river and plain with
piles of corpses. I saw all Italy turn tail before
one man, at the fierce sound and fury of that
onset. I saw cowardly Varro thrown down his
weapons and ride quickly from the field. And
I saw you, brave Paullus, fall, pierced through

and through, on the bodies of your comrades. That day's slaughter has avenged our losses at the Aegatian Isles, and our slavish treaty. We could not hope for more than the gods have granted. Another day such as that and Carthage shall rule alone over other nations, and command the world. As witness to their defeat behold the tokens their nobles wore on their left hands.' Then he poured out, before their wondering eyes, those glittering golden rings, and that great pile confirmed the truth of his words. Then he continued: 'It only remains for us to overturn the foundations of a ruined Rome, level her to the ground. Come, refresh our numbers, weakened by events; open your generous hands and buy us mercenaries. Our elephants, the terror of the Romans, are now few, our supplies fail.'

BOOK XI:542-553 MAGO REPROACHES HANNO

While speaking he directed fierce looks at Hanno, whose wicked mind had long been stirred to bitter opposition by Hannibal's growing fame, saying: 'Will you approve our actions now? Was I not right to refuse Roman domination? Would you still vote as before, to surrender Hannibal to them? Unhappy man, let that heart all black with envy's poison, filled with bile, be altered, softened now by so many glorious trophies. Behold, the hand, his hand, that you wished to yield to Roman torture, has filled rivers, lakes and shores, and the wide plains with Roman blood.' So Mago spoke, while his hearers' unconcealed support cheered him.

BOOK XI:554-600 HANNO RESPONDS

Stirred by jealousy and anger, Hanno then responded: ‘Such wild abuse from a foolish youth hardly surprises, since he is proud by nature, and his brother’s disposition clearly evidenced in the idle venom of his tongue. He need not think I have changed or will desist, for I propose we sue for peace now, lay down our weapons stained by breaking the treaty, now, and avoid destructive war. And weigh well indeed yourselves what he asks, I beg; no other decision is open to us. Arms, men, gold, ships, supplies and even elephants he demands. He could not ask for more in defeat! We have drenched the soil of Italy with Roman blood, Latium is laid low in the field. So let us allay our fears, noble victor, and enjoy our lives at home. Let us not exhaust these houses so often decimated by war’s insatiable demands. Now I declare, even now (yet may this prophecy prove false, I pray, and my mind be victim to a mere delusion) that the fatal day is near. I am familiar with their stubborn hearts, and I foresee an anger born of defeat. You I fear, Cannae, only you! Lower the standards, and go sue swiftly for peace, indeed, demand, a treaty: it will not be granted. Their resentment will bring, believe me, greater destruction than they have suffered; the victor grants peace more readily than the defeated. Tell us then, you who announce these great triumphs so proudly and fill ignorant ears with a froth of words, tell us why that brother of yours, that equal of Mars, the like of whom has never been seen on earth, tell us why he has never as yet set eyes on the walls of

Rome! Must we then tear lads from their mothers' arms and make them fight, lads still unfit to carry heavy armour? Must we, at his command, build a thousand ships, search all Libya for elephants, so that this Hannibal can prolong his power, fight on for years, and rule us till the day he dies? Do not, when we are encircled by hidden nets, despoil your houses of those dear to you; limit their power, these generals, cap their resources. Peace is the best of things human beings are allowed to know; peace is greater than a thousand triumphs; peace has the power to guarantee our safety, and grant equality to citizens; let us then recall peace to the citadel of Carthage, cleansing the stain of perfidy from your city, Dido. If Hannibal has such desire for war, if he persists, despite his countrymen's request, in refusing to sheathe the sword, I exhort you to deny the madman supplies, and I move that Mago report such to his brother.'

BOOK XI:601-611 THE CARTHAGINIAN SENATE BACKS MAGO

He would have added more (for he had not said enough to assuage his feelings) but now spontaneous dissent assailed him, the body of senators crying out: 'Shall we desert, in this hour of victory, Hannibal, the glory of Libya, invincible in battle, merely because he incites your anger? Shall we refuse to send him supplies? Must one man's envy bar us from a dominion already won?' So they readily voted means to further the war, and showed the absent general their favour, in the presence of his emissary. And though an envy born of malice had thus sought to

disparage Hannibal's immortal deeds, and
deny the aid needed to augment his fame,
they also vowed to send supplies to Spain.

End of Book XI of the Punica

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BOOK XII:1-26 HANNIBAL MOVES AGAINST NEIGHBOURING CITIES

Now that harsh winter was hiding his icy head,
his stormy brow, his cloudy face and towering
gales, beneath the earth, and a pleasant spring
warmed the land with gentle breezes and clear
skies, the Carthaginians emerged from Capua,
spreading terror far and wide: so serpents hide
when northerlies chill the Thracian mountains,
but, when the season is more promising, glide
and gleam in their fresh skin, lifting glistening
heads while breathing venom from raised jaws.
Once Hannibal's banners gleamed in the fields,
all was deserted and, driven by fear, the people
locked their gates in expectation of this enemy,
filled with trepidation, distrusting their defences.
Yet the vigour which had seen the Carthaginians
penetrate the Alps, clearing a path for themselves;
master the Trebia; defile Trasimene with Roman
blood, was absent now. Their limbs were torpid,
muscles lax: weakened by luxury, dulled by wine
and enticing sleep, men used to chill nights under
a stormy sky and weighed down by heavy mail,
spurning their tents in the pouring rain and hail,
sword at their side in darkness, lance and quiver,
treating their weapons as parts of their bodies,
now found their helms a burden, light shields
ponderous, their spears silent, lacking menace.

BOOK XII:27-59 HANNIBAL IS THWARTED AT NAPLES (PARTHENOPE)

Mild Parthenope was first to feel the renewal
of the war, not for its wealth or because he
scorned its fighting spirit, but for the safety
of its harbour for ships bound from Carthage.
This city is now a place of peace, and a gentle
host to the Muses, where one lives free from

the weight of care. Parthenope, that daughter
of Achelous, gave the city its memorable name;
one of the Sirens, long ruling the waves with
song, her sweet melody over the water brought
death to wretched sailors. Hannibal now attacked
from the rear (the sea defending the city in front)
but could make no inroads despite his best efforts
as he hammered at the barred gates with battering
rams in vain. Thus the victor at Cannae stood
helpless before a Greek city, proving the wisdom
of his caution in not marching from that bloody
field to attack the citadel of Rome. And he now
reproached his men: 'You called me slow to add
to victory because you were denied the chance to
scale the walls of Rome after our success in battle.
Enter Naples then, and in a city defended merely
by Greeks set me the feast you promised to grant
me in Jove's house!' Fearing for his reputation in
days to come, if he were to retreat from the first
city he assaulted, he dared all and exercised deceit
to supplement the sword. Yet flames issued now
from the battlements, with a shower of missiles
discharged suddenly from the circuit of ramparts.
So Jove's tawny eagle, on seeing a serpent glide
silently to the heights where her young are hidden
to threaten her nestlings with its venomous jaws,
flies round and round the nest, attacking the snake
with beak and talons that bear the lighting-bolts.

BOOK XII:60-82 HANNIBAL ATTACKS CUMAE IN VAIN

Wearying of this at last, Hannibal chose to turn
his attention to nearby Cumae, to alter his fortune
by a change of place and prevent the damage to his
reputation. But Sempronius Gracchus, the governor
of the city, a surer defence than the walls themselves,
denied him, stopped him from camping by the gates
seeking to force an entrance. Now rendered helpless

Hannibal rode about probing the countryside around,
trying to rouse his men with memory of past actions:
'By the gods, soldiers, do you forget your former
deeds, what barrier do these Greek cities present?
Where is the challenge? Does some greater obstacle
than the Alps present itself, do I then bid you climb
peaks that brush the sky? Though terrain like that
lay before us, and fresh cliffs rising to the stars,
would you not go where I lead you, and bear your
weapons to the heights? Are you, alas, to be barred,
mouths agape, from the walls and ramparts of Cumae,
thwarted by Gracchus, who dares not quit the gates?
In all likelihood, the world will now impute to chance
everything that your efforts have achieved. I beg you,
by Trasimene where the gods favoured us, by Trebia,
by the ashes of Saguntum, render yourselves worthy
of the glory that follows you, and summon Cannae.'

BOOK XII:83-112 CAPUA AND DAEDALUS: FAILURE AT POZZUOLI

So Hannibal sought by exhortation to rouse spirits
weakened by luxury and enervated by success. Here,
while inspecting the defences, he noticed a gleaming
temple on the summit of the citadel, whose origins
Virrius, the unbending governor of proud Capua,
explained: 'That which you see is not the work of
our day, it was built by our ancestors. Daedalus,
so the tales goes, when in fear of Minos the king
of Crete, contrived to leave no trace on earth for
his pursuer, but dared to climb the sky on wings
he had devised, and show humankind how to fly.
His body suspended, he sailed amongst the clouds,
those alien wings startling the gods. His son Icarus
he taught to imitate the flight of birds, as well, by
adopting artificial plumage; but when the waxed
feathers melted, he saw the lad with those ill-fated
wings plunge into the wild waves. While yielding
to sudden grief, Daedalus clenched his arms, and

the action unknowingly directed his course. Here
then, thankful for surviving that voyage through
the clouds, he built a temple to Phoebus, shedding
his bold wings.' So Virrius spoke, while Hannibal
was busy counting the days passed without battle,
ashamed of his inaction. Groaning at his lack of
success, and remembering the cities besieged in
vain, he sought to take revenge on Pozzuoli, that
city of Dicaearchus. Yet here too, now the sea,
now the walls of solid stone and the defenders'
exertions obstructed him. Leaving his army to
struggle slowly on, in their attempt to penetrate
the tough defences, he himself visited the sights
that the neighbouring land and waters presented.

BOOK XII:113-157 THE REGION AROUND POZZUOLI

Capua's leading citizens accompanied Hannibal:
one explained how the hot springs at Baiae gained
their name, being so called after Baios, Ulysses'
helmsman. Another that the Lucrine Lake was
once known as Cocytus, praising the roadway
Hercules made through the waves, as that son
of Amphitryon, whilst herding Geryon's oxen,
split the waters asunder. A third pointed out
Lake Avernus, once called Styx by the locals,
though under its new name celebrated for its
healing waters, since it was dreaded by birds,
darkened by shadow cast by a gloomy grove,
and exhaled foul vapour to the lowering sky,
while among the cities the Stygian rites were
still observed, homage to a savage superstition.
It was said a nearby swamp led to the waters
of Acheron, blind depths of stagnant marsh
below which foul abysses yawned, troubling
the shades beneath with flickering lights. And
close by too lay the City of the Cimmerians,
wrapped for long ages in shadow and infernal

mist, under the pall of night: and they told him
of that Tartarean city's unfathomable darkness.
Then they pointed out the Phlegraean Fields,
that breathe flame and sulphur and hot bitumen.
Black vapour rises from the earth, the ground,
long-heated by subterranean fires, trembles and
exhales Stygian blasts into the air. Mulciber
seethes and sends a dreadful hissing from his
rumbling caverns while he struggles to burst
their bounds or emerge from the sea, groaning
with a mournful menacing sound, devouring
the lacerated innards of the earth, or shaking
the mountains undermined by his murmuring.
They say the Giants that Hercules conquered,
trouble the ground that is piled above them,
the distant fields are scorched by their breath,
and the gods tremble whenever they threaten
to shatter the mass by which they are burdened.
Procida was apparent, the isle where the savage
giant Mimas was buried, and Ischia further off
which covers giant Iapetus who vents black
smoke and flames from his rebellious maw,
seeking, if ever he is freed, to renew his war
with Jupiter and the gods. And Hannibal was
shown Mount Vesuvius, its summit devoured
by fires, the lava from the mountain all about,
the matter it hurls rivalling Etna's fatal stones.
He saw Misenum, named from Aeneas' dead
steersman buried there, and Bauli, Hercules'
stables near the sea. He marvelled at all those
menacing waters and the heaving of the land.

BOOK XII:158-180 HANNIBAL ATTACKS NOLA (215BC)

When he had viewed the sights, he returned
to Pozzuoli's high walls, laying waste Gaurus'
vine-clad heights, where the grapes flourish,
then swiftly transferred his troops to Nola,

a Cumaean colony. Nola, situated on the plain,
is surrounded by a ring of towers and, though
easy of approach, the level ground is defended
by high ramparts. Yet Marcellus, who brought
aid and support, was not given to sheltering
his men within, and so defended the city by
striking first. Seeing a host of Carthaginians
advancing over the plain towards the walls,
he cried: 'To arms, men, to arms, the savage
enemy is here,' while arming himself as he
shouted. His officers flocked to him and, as
ever, fastened a crimson plume to his helm.
Then his voice rang out, as he disposed his
forces: 'You must guard the right-hand gate,
Nero; and, Tullius, pride of the Volscians,
you must lead your men and the soldiers
of Larino to that left gate. But when I give
the word open them both, silently, sending
a shower of missiles over the field. When
they are open, I myself will charge among
the enemy, the cavalry following after me.'
While Marcellus was speaking the enemy
were trying to demolish the ramparts and,
scorning scaling ladders, breach the walls.

BOOK XII:181-200 MARCELLUS SEIZES THE INITIATIVE

The trumpets brayed on all sides, warriors
shouted and the horses neighed, the clarion
call rang out, with the harsh cry of the horn,
the armour ringing on their eager bodies.
The gates unbarred, a fierce host emerged,
as the unexpected flood of men poured out,
as violently as a river when the dykes are
broken, or the sea driven by a northerly
against the cliffs, or the winds when they
escape their prison, warring with the earth.
Disheartened when he saw this avalanche

of armed warriors Hannibal lost confidence.
The Roman general pressed his advantage,
riding ahead, stooping to pierce the backs
of an enemy in flight, as he exhorted his
men: ‘Forward, onward, make haste! For
the gods favour us, and this hour is ours.
There lies the road to Capua’s walls!’ And
now again he called out to Hannibal: ‘Stay,
where are you going? I am addressing you,
the leader, not the backs of your Libyans.
Stay! Arms, field and a fight are all at hand.
Let the soldiers hold fast and watch us duel.
I, Marcellus, challenge you to single combat.’
So the Roman spoke, while the Carthaginian
was tempted to fight for honour and the prize.

BOOK XII:201-211 HANNIBAL REBUKES HIS MEN

But Juno could not watch with an easy mind,
and diverted Hannibal from his purpose as he
was rushing towards his doom. He laboured
instead to rally and recall his stricken troops:
‘Is this the outcome of our time in Capua, that
unfortunate city, is this what self-indulgence
and the lap of luxury brings? Stand, wretches,
your great glories are now an embarrassment.
Trust me, if you retreat today you can expect
no mercy: you will find the whole weight of
Italy against you, and all your fierce warfare
will result, if you are beaten now, in the loss
of every hope of a life of peace.’ His shouting
drowned the trumpet-blare, so the sound of
his savage rebuke still penetrated their ears.

BOOK XII:212-252 PEDIANUS KILLS CINYPS

Now Pedianus fought in Polydamas' armour
and claimed descent from Trojan Antenor.
He was no mean scion of his race, the pride
of the sacred River Timavus, and his name
was dear to the Euganean land. Eridanus,
god of the River Po, and all the peoples of
the Veneto, and the Paduans who delight
in the springs of Aponus, declared he had
no equal in war, or the peaceful company
of the Muses, or in the quiet life of study,
and he sweetened his labours with the lyre:
no other was more acquainted with both
Mars and Apollo. Now, riding full speed
after the retreating enemy, he recognised
Paullus' helm and plume, spoils snatched
from the latter's corpse following his death.
Young Cinyps was the wearer, favoured by
Hannibal, and proud of this great gift from
his leader. None of the enemy was more
handsome, no face more charming, bright
as ivory which gleams and is ever new in
Tivoli's air, or a pearl from the Red Sea
whose purity dazzles, glistening in a lady's
ear. When Pedianus spied him in the rear
ranks, conspicuous in that shining helm
with its plume, as if the ghost of Paullus
had risen suddenly from the shades seeking
his lost armour, he charged at Cinyps wildly,
crying: 'Wretched coward, who dare to don
that sacred helmet, such that all would call it
a crime against heaven were Hannibal himself
to wear it! Paullus, behold me!' So he called,
summoning that hero's spirit to watch as he
drove his sharp spear between the fugitive's
ribs. Then he sprang from his horse, tearing
away Paullus' helm and plume, as his victim

watched. Death robbed Cinyps of his beauty,
a dark hue spread over his snow-white skin
spoiling the comeliness of his form, while his
ambrosial locks were disordered, as his neck
weakened and his head, all despoiled, bowed,
hiding the marble throat. So the morning star,
Lucifer, rising from the Ocean, shining with
fresh splendour, dims with the sudden cloud
and, fading, hides his failing light in the dark.
Even Pedianus, when he had stripped him of
that helmet, was struck dumb by the sight of
Cinyps' face, his fierce expression softening.

BOOK XII:253-280 MARCELLUS TRIUMPHS

Pedianus then carried off the helm, amidst
a clamour from his men, urging on his fiery
horse, which champed the foaming bit till
the blood came, fighting fiercely as he met
Marcellus in the swift confusion of battle,
who recognised the noble trophy: 'Bravo,
you scion of Antenor, and worthy of your
brave ancestors, bravo! Now let us seek to
do what remains, and despoil Hannibal of
his helm!' And he hurled his deadly spear
which gave out a fierce hissing, nor would
his effort have been in vain, perhaps, had
mighty Gestar, reacting, not met it with his
own body, and protected his general as he
fought beside him, so that the heavy spear,
thirsting for Hannibal's blood, pierced him
instead, spending its angry force on another
target. Hannibal galloped swiftly back to his
camp in rage, troubled by his narrow escape.
Now the Carthaginian troops turned tail and
fled headlong, with the Romans following,
each sating his long-nursed anger at defeat,
and waving a bloody sword, in emulation,
for heaven and the avenging deities to see.

That day first proved what none had dared
believe of the gods, that they might allow
the Libyan general to be stalled in battle.
The Romans seized men and chariots and
elephants, tearing armour from the living
and carrying it away, then halted, content
to have seen Hannibal retreat at the point
of a spear. Then they cheered Marcellus
as equal in glory to Mars, as he rode on
accompanied by a triumphal procession,
a finer hero even than when he had borne
the greatest spoil, as victor, to Jove's temple.

BOOK XII:281-294 HANNIBAL COMPLAINS

Forcing the enemy back from his camp, after
a struggle, Hannibal raged: 'What will it take
to wash away this stain, what oceans now of
Roman blood? Is it granted Italy to witness
my retreat? O mightiest of the gods, do you
think Trebia's victor deserves such shame,
and such defeat? And you, my men, so long
invincible, but now alas conquered by peace
and Capua's luxuries, it is not I who lapse
from past actions, not I who lower victorious
standards before the Romans: you forced me
to retreat. I saw you, as I summoned you to
battle, slinking away in fear as if I were some
Roman general. What remains of your martial
spirit, daring to turn your backs to my call?'
So Hannibal; but the Roman troops returned
to Nola's walls shouting, carrying the spoils.

BOOK XII:295-319 ROME REGAINS CONFIDENCE

And Rome, so long used to hearing of defeat
never of success, took heart again at the news

of victory, and a first sign of heaven's favour. And now they punished all who had shirked war and hardship and hid when the trumpet sounded; and then those taken prisoner who clung to life and by a trick claimed to have fulfilled the conditions of their release from the Carthaginians; thus the nation was freed of their guilt. Metellus also was punished, for his wretched policy and the shameful crime of proposing Italy be abandoned. Such were men's hearts in those days. And the women were of the same mind as the men, claiming their share of praise: all of them competing in their contributions to the war, bringing their family heirlooms; diadems, bracelets, tearing the necklaces from their very necks. Nor were the men displeased, hearing them praised, at such a time and in such a crisis: happy to grant them precedence in a never to be forgotten sacrifice. The high court of the Senate followed their example. In eager rivalry they poured out private wealth for the public good, and delighted in stripping their houses bare, retaining nothing for their own use in better days. And even common citizens joined in. So that a wounded Rome employed all her body and limbs, and once again raised her face towards the heavens.

BOOK XII:320-341 THE ROMANS CONSULT THE DELPHIC ORACLE

Hope, so dear to the sufferer, was increased by envoys bringing an answer from Delphi. They brought the good news they had heard at Apollo's shrine, a divine voice thundering from the cavern, and the priestess, possessed, moaning out her prophecy: 'People of Venus, put aside the worst fears gripping your hearts;

for you defeat is over, and the direst hardships of war: the lighter tasks remain, and risk but not ruin. Pray to the gods, make offerings, and drench the altars with hot blood. Do not flee from these evils. Mars will aid you and Apollo himself, who always lightens Trojan suffering as men know, will avert the imminent danger. But, above all, a hundred altars must smoke in Jove's honour and a hundred knives must slay their sacrificial offerings. His power will drive the savage storm, these angry clouds of war, to Libya; you yourselves shall see him shake the aegis, in battle for a troubled world.' With the news of this message proclaimed in the cave of Delphi, the populace, hearing of the divine prophecy, vied to climb Capitol Hill, prostrating themselves before Jupiter, honouring his shrine with sacrificial blood, then sang a paean, praying it all prove true.

BOOK XII:342-386 MANLIUS TORQUATUS IN SARDINIA

Meanwhile the ageing Torquatus had attacked Sardinia, where he had previously campaigned, with men from Italy. For Hampsagoras, proud of a name inherited from his Trojan ancestors, had invited Carthage to renew hostilities there. His son Hostus was a fine lad deserving of a finer parent; the father being averse to peace, devoted to barbarous customs, and reliant on his son's youthful splendour, while seeking to rekindle his declining years through war. Hostus, on witnessing Torquatus' headlong advance with the standards, eluded him by his knowledge of the terrain, finding secret tracks through the glades and, escaping by concealed byways, he hid himself deep in the leafy shade of a wooded valley. This

island of Sardinia, encircled by sounding waters, sloping to the sea and carved by the waves, comprises an irregular terrain shaped like a naked foot. Hence the first colonists from Greece named it Ichnusa or ‘the footstep’. Later Sardus, boasting of his descent from Melquart, the Libyan Hercules, renamed the isle after himself. Some Trojans, then, dispersing overseas after the sack of Troy, arrived and settled there in force. Iolaus brought it no less fame, sailing there with the Thespiadae aboard their father’s ships. It is said too, that, after Actaeon had suffered the sad punishment of being torn limb from limb after witnessing Diana bathing, Aristaeus, his father, appalled by the son’s strange fate, travelled over the sea to Sardinia’s coast, guided to those fresh shores by his own mother Cyrene. The island is free of snakes and their venom, but the climate sadly spoiled by the numerous swamps. The western coast, facing Italy, its rocky cliffs defying the waves, is sultry, while inland the parched crops are scorched by excessive heat when the southerly winds blow in summer. Yet the rest of the isle is nurtured by the kindly favour of Ceres. Such the nature of the land where Hostus eluded Torquatus, time and time again, among the pathless woodlands, hoping for Carthaginian troops and for Spanish allies to help in the fighting. His spirits raised by their landing, he burst, at once from hiding, and bristling with weapons the armies opposed each other on a wide front, eager to meet and engage closely. Spears hurled from a distance, sped over the open space between them, till finally

they took to the tried and trusted sword.
Then dire carnage followed, killing and
dying, as lives fell to the savage blades.

BOOK XII:387-419 APOLLO PROTECTS ENNIUS

I cannot hope to tell of those countless
deaths and deadly actions in a manner
worthy of the facts, nor find words fitting
for the conflict's intensity, but, Calliope,
grant me, for my labours, the power to
transmit to future ages the little known
but heroic actions of a man, and crown
a warring poet with the wreath he merits.
For Ennius, born of the ancient line of
King Messapus, fought in the front rank,
and clasped the noble staff of a centurion
in his right hand. He came from Calabria's
rugged country, a native of ancient Rugge,
this poet being now its sole claim to fame.
At the forefront of the fight (as Orpheus
once put aside the lyre, when Cyzicus
made war on the Argonauts, and hurled
darts from Rhodope) he was conspicuous
in killing many of the enemy, his ardour
increasing with the number of the dead.
Hostus, hoping now for endless fame by
eliminating so fierce an obstacle, rushed
towards him and threw his deadly spear.
But Apollo, from on high in the clouds,
mocked his vain attempt, and sent it far
in the air, then spoke: 'You are too bold
too insolent: relinquish your desire. That
sacred head is dearly loved by the Muses,
and Ennius a poet worthy of myself. He
shall be first to sing of Roman conflict
in Homeric verse, and praise its leaders
to the sky; he shall teach Mount Helicon

to resonate in a Latin mode, nor yield to
Hesiod of Ascra in glory or in honour.'
So Phoebus spoke, as Hostus was struck
by a vengeful arrow which pierced both
his temples. His soldiers, stunned by his
fall, all turned together and fled in retreat.
Hampsagoras, hearing of his son's death,
was mad with rage and, with the hideous
cries of a barbarian, stabbed his own chest,
in haste to join his son among the shades.

BOOK XII:420-433 HANNIBAL CAMPAIGNS ELSEWHERE (214-213 BC)

But Hannibal, beaten and severely mauled
by Marcellus in the battle, fled the open field
to direct his greater strength against luckless
Acerra, subjecting the town to fire and sword;
and, with as heavy a hand and fierce an anger,
hurled his forces against Nocera, and razed
its walls; then attacked Casilinum, thwarted
by the unequal efforts of the defenders until
he finally forced an entrance by deception,
and granted the besieged their lives for gold.
Then he led his army to the Apulian plains,
turning his fury wherever spoils or anger led.
Petelia, unhappy in its loyalty, and a second
Saguntum in its fate, was set aflame to its
rooftops, a town that had once prided itself
on inheriting Hercules' bow and his arrows.

BOOK XII:434-448 THE CARTHAGINIAN FLEET ESCAPES TARENTO

Tarento had also proclaimed for the enemy,
and the Carthaginians had entered the city.
But a strong Roman garrison, confident of
their position, occupied the gleaming citadel.
Hannibal cleverly freed his fleet which was

anchored in the inner harbour (since the sea
there pierces the cliffs in a narrow entrance,
and fills the great basin with a depth of water
protected from the waves) and so thwarted,
and prevented from sailing, by the citadel
above. Transporting them cleverly overland,
on slopes hidden from the citadel, by laying
a smooth surface of fresh-killed bullock hides
beneath the wooden wagon wheels, he moved
the ships easily across the meadows. The fleet,
rolling over hills and through thickets, with oars
shipped, soon reached shore, and rode the waves.

BOOK XII:449-478 THE DEATH OF GRACCHUS (212BC)

As Hannibal astonished the waters by transporting
the fleet in this manner, news arrived that filled him
with concern. While he was far off trying to capture
Tarento and furrowing the fields with ships' prows,
he heard that Capua was besieged, her very gates
torn from their hinges, and her citizens exposed to
all the horrors of war. He angrily abandoned his
campaign, while shame and fury lent him wings
as he moved at high speed through neighbouring
country, hastening to battle, threatening vengeance,
as a tigress missing a cub anxiously races in pursuit,
crossing the Caucasus in a few hours, or traversing
the infant Granges with a flying leap, till she, with
lightning speed, locates the spoor of her young one,
and then seizing the enemy spends her fury on him.
He encountered Centenius, wildly daring, immune
to risk, who was quickly routed, his force scattered.
Yet there was little glory in that, since Centenius,
once the bearer of a centurion's staff, had merely
roused the country folk then suddenly hurled their
badly armed force against the enemy, to their doom.
Fourteen thousand were killed (nor did the victors
halt) Fourteen thousand more, fully-armed and led

by Fulvius, no more adept at war despite his name, fell to the enemy who rushed on over their prostrate bodies and refused to check the pace of their march. Hannibal paused only to bury Gracchus, seeking a reputation and a name for human decency though delighted by his death. For Gracchus, when seeking a meeting and agreement with the false Lucanians had been wickedly and treacherously killed by his hosts and, as he had been murdered, and by hidden guile, Hannibal snatched the credit for the burial.

BOOK XII:479-506 HANNIBAL CAMPS NEAR BESIEGED CAPUA

Once it was known that Hannibal was heading for Capua, no stone was left unturned: both the consuls Fulvius Flaccus and Appius Claudius hurried there; and the troops from Nola, while the younger Flavius brought his men swiftly from Arpi, and the praetors (Nero from one direction, Silanus from another) now urged on their forces night and day, ready for battle. They converged from all sides, all Rome's generals set to oppose that one young commander. Hannibal himself camped high on Mount Tifata, the heights, not far from the walls, from which he looked down on the city below. Indeed, seeing himself countered by so many men, and the allied city besieged, so that he was denied entry and the Capuans an exit, he was concerned at the outcome, thinking now to remove every obstacle at sword-point, or now to relinquish that purpose and by cunning tempt that vast host from the gates, and thus liberate the besieged city. He debated with himself, wearied by his thoughts: 'Where does my troubled mind summon me? Shall I run the risk again, though the situation is adverse? Shall I retreat, while Capua looks on? Or shall I sit here on the neighbouring heights and see an allied city sacked before my eyes? Fabius and his Master of the Horse, Minucius, never troubled me, when I

escaped in triumph, through hills held by Romans,
by tying burning brands to the horns of the cattle
and sending them through the fields scattering fire.
I have not yet lost my cunning: if Capua's defence
is beyond me, I have the means to besiege Rome.'

BOOK XII:507-540 HANNIBAL ADVANCES ON ROME

Once this was settled, his mind decided, he would
not wait for the sun to drive those fiery steeds from
Ocean, but with voice and gesture ordered his men
to march, showing his bold intent: 'On soldiers, on,
with courage to conquer every hardship, march on
as fast as humanly possible. Rome is your goal, and
this the road that the Alps and Cannae paved for you.
Go, now, batter your shields against Rome's walls;
take vengeance for the loss of Capua, a price worth
paying if you reach the Palatine, and see the god of
Thunder driven from his seat on the Tarpeian Rock.'
Thus inspired, they marched swiftly. The name of
Rome rang in their ears; Rome was before their eyes;
they believing the general's timing more apt than if
he had led them there from Cannae's deadly field.
They soon crossed the Vulturnus, the rear-guard
destroying the boats by fire to delay the Romans.
Then the soldiers swiftly passed through the fields
of Teano and Thracian Cales, Orithyia's city named
for her son. Next they laid waste the land of Allifae,
dear to Bacchus, and the country where the nymphs
of Monte Cassino dwell; quickly the speedy columns
passed Aquino and Fregellae where the buried giant
sends up smoke. On they went, over those heights
where the warlike men of Frosinone cling to rugged
cliffs and Anagni rises on its steep swelling slopes,
its land fertile for corn. So they reached the plains
and fields of Labicum, and left behind the walls of
Tusculum, battered by the ram, but not worthy of
much delay. Nor did the beauty of Mount Algidus

detain him, nor Juno's city of Gabii. At headlong
speed Hannibal marched to the banks of the chill
Anio, whose sulphurous waters wind so smoothly,
gliding with scarce a murmur toward Father Tiber.

BOOK XII:541-557 ROME'S CITIZENS PANIC

Here, Hannibal proudly planted his standards and
measured out his camp, and while Anio's banks
shook to the sound of hoof-beats the noise drove
Rhea Silvia deep down to hide in the river-god's
sacred caverns, while all the water-nymphs fled.
Meanwhile the women of Rome roamed around
in distraction like mad things, as if the walls had
already been breached. In their fear they thought
the shades of the dead risen to their sight, ghosts
of the mangled warriors who died beside the fatal
streams of Trebia and Ticinus, the bloody forms
of Paullus and Gracchus and Flaminius wavering
before their eyes. Crowds blocked the streets, yet
the senators stood erect, formidable in their wrath,
and their stern faces quenched the wave of panic.
Meanwhile hidden tears would be shed behind
some helmet, as men wondered what threatening
fate might bring, or what the gods might intend.
The young men took station on the high turrets,
each man reflecting on the situation in his mind:
so Rome was content simply to defend its walls!

BOOK XII:558-586 HANNIBAL THREATENS ROME (211BC)

Hannibal barely granted his men one night's sleep
to recover from their swift march, while he himself
kept watch, never resting voluntarily and thinking
the time given over to sleep stolen from life itself.
He donned his shining armour, then rode swiftly
round the walls, ordering the Numidian cavalry

to gallop ahead, while the trampling of the horses raised a panic in the city. Now he examined every approach, now he beat at the closed gates with his spear, in anger, enjoying the terror aroused within. Now he stood motionless on some hill, focusing his gaze on Rome, learning the names and origins of its sites. He would have surveyed it all, noting every part of the spectacle before him, if Fulvius had not arrived in haste though not having wholly abandoned his siege of Capua. At last, Hannibal, having feasted his eyes on Rome, directed all his joyous squadrons towards camp. And when night was driven from the sky, and the waves reddened in the dawn rays, Aurora summoning men to their labours, he demolished the ramparts and sent his forces out, shouting aloud with all his might: 'O, my comrades, by your endless laurels, by those right hands consecrated with blood, advance and equal your past deeds, let your daring in battle be as great as Rome's fear. Raze this last obstacle that remains, and nothing will be left for you to conquer in all this world. Nor though they trace their origins to Romulus and his father, Mars, should you let that prove a cause of delay; seize this city that knows what it is to be taken, for the Senones stormed it in their thousands, and the Senators are even now, perhaps, seated in their high curule chairs as their ancestors sat, ready to make a noble end, waiting for you, and for death.'

BOOK XII:587-604 FULVIUS GOES OUT TO BATTLE

So spoke Hannibal; but on their side the warriors of Rome needed no leader's speech or admonition. Their women and children and dear parents crying and stretching out their arms in supplication were incentive enough. Mothers held out their infants so the latter's cries moved willing men's hearts,

and planted kisses on hands that clutched swords.
Men ready to march and in dense array oppose
the enemy beyond the walls, look back at their
loved ones and choke back their tears. Indeed,
as the opened gates turned on their hinges and
that host went forth in arms together, sounds
of beaten flesh, mingled with cries and tears,
rose to the sky above the high walls, as their
women shrieked, and bared their breasts, and
loosed their hair. Fulvius rode at the head, as
he shouted: 'All know that not of his own free
will has Hannibal come to attack our homes:
He fled from Capua's gates.' He attempted to
say more, but a dreadful crash of thunder in
the heavens above intervened, and a sudden
gale blew from the storm-clouds in the sky.

BOOK XII:605-626 JUPITER AND THE GODS ASSIST ROME

Jupiter, while returning from Ethiopian lands,
had seen Hannibal's threatening advance on
the city of Romulus, and summoning the gods
ordered them to disperse among the seven hills,
and defend the Trojan walls at once. He himself,
from the Tarpeian Heights invoked his weapons,
wind and cloud, fierce hail, thunder and lightning
and dense rain. The sky itself shook and trembled,
darkness veiled the heavens, as night hid the earth
in a black shroud. Blinded by the storm, the enemy
found neighbouring Rome concealed from sight.
Fire was hurled at them from the rumbling clouds
and flame hissed about their limbs. Then Boreas,
and Notus, and dark-winged Africus began a war
of winds fierce enough to sate the anger in Jove's
mind. A deluge fell, driven by hurricanes and by
storm-clouds black as pitch, covering the plains
around with boiling waves. Then Jupiter, ruler
of the gods, high on his hill-top, hurled a bolt

of lightning which struck at Hannibal's shield,
though he resolved not to yield, his spear-point
melting, his sword as if thrust in a fiery furnace.

BOOK XII:627-645 HANNIBAL RETREATS TO CAMP

Even with fire-damaged weapons, Hannibal still
rallied his men, calling out that the flames from
the sky fell at random, and the roaring of those
winds was empty noise. At last with his men all
suffering, the heavens hostile, no enemy visible,
not a single sword, through the rain, he signalled
a retreat to the camp and breathed out his anger
and his grief: 'Rome, you survive another day
thanks to these wild winds, these stormy skies,
but not even if Jove descends to earth in person
shall you escape my grasp tomorrow!' Yet, as he
uttered these words through his clenched teeth,
behold, the sky cleared, the daylight glowed, and
purged of clouds the atmosphere shone brightly.
The Romans sensed the presence of the god and,
laying down their weapons, they stretched out
their arms reverently towards the high Capitol,
then wreathed the temple there with festive laurel.
There too they saw that the face of Jove's statue
was sunlit now though bathed not long ago with
moisture, and they cried out in prayer: 'Supreme
Father of the Gods, grant, O grant, that Hannibal
be killed in battle by a sacred bolt from the sky:
no hand but yours has the power to destroy him.'

BOOK XII:646-663 THE FIGHT IS RENEWED ON THE FOLLOWING DAY

So they prayed as silence fell and Hesperus led
the earth into night's shadows. But when the sun
raised his shining torch and hid the morning-star
and mortal creatures again entered on life's round,

the Carthaginians returned, nor did the Romans
rest in camp. But swords were not yet unsheathed,
barely a spear's length separating the two armies,
when the brightness of the sky suddenly faded,
a dense darkness followed, and the daylight fled
while Jupiter re-armed for battle. Wind swirled,
and a southerly drove on a mass of fiery cloud.
Jove himself thundered, till Mount Rhodope
and Taurus, Pindus and Atlas quaked. The dark
pools of Erebus heard, as Typhoeus, that giant
buried deep beneath Ischia, knew, once more,
the sound of war in heaven. Again the South
wind attacked, driving on a pitch-black cloud
with bursts of hail, forcing Hannibal to retreat
to camp despite his reluctance and vain threats.

BOOK XII:664-685 HANNIBAL, THWARTED, ROUSES HIS TROOPS

Yet when his soldiers, protected by the ramparts,
had laid aside their arms, the skies cleared again,
and the face of the heavens smiled once more,
such that it was hard to credit that a Jupiter so
benign wielded the lighting-bolt not long ago,
and troubled so placid a sky with his thunder.
Hannibal held firm, promising on oath that
those wild elements would not attack further,
if only they might regain their native courage
and believe it no sacrilege for Carthage to sack
Rome. Where were invincible Jove's lightning
bolts when the sword covered Cannae's field
with the dead? Where then, when Trasimene
was swollen with Roman blood? 'If the ruler
of the gods fights for Rome,' he cried, 'if he
is hurling lightning bolts from his high seat,
why, amongst all that, is he so unwilling to
strike at me, his adversary? Are we to retreat
before winds and storms? Reveal, once more,
that steadfastness of purpose with which you

chose to fight a second war, despite the treaty
sealed by our senate.' So Hannibal sought to
rouse their ardour, until the Sun unyoked his
foaming steeds. Yet night failed to quell his
concern, nor would sleep visit his troubled
mind, while his fury revived with the dawn.
Then once more he summoned his anxious
men to arms, striking his shield thunderous
blows, in imitation of the heavens' murmur.

BOOK XII:686-700 JUPITER CALLS ON JUNO FOR AID

But when Hannibal learnt the Roman Senate,
trusting in divine aid, had sent reinforcements
to Spain, and their troops had left Rome during
the hours of darkness, he attacked more fiercely
indignant that Rome was so untroubled by him
that the citizens felt it safe to relax their guard.
He was approaching the walls when Jove spoke
to an anxious Juno, and with this warning tried
to address her fears: 'Wife and sister dear to me,
why will you not rein in this young hero whose
insolence knows no limits? He has destroyed
Saguntum, and scaled the Alps, set the sacred
River Po in chains, and fouled Lake Trasimene.
And now is he set to force a path to our seats
and citadels? Halt the man! For now, as you can
see, he calls up fire to match my lightning-bolts.'

BOOK XII:701-728 JUNO DIVERTS HANNIBAL FROM HIS PURPOSE

Juno, Saturn's daughter, grateful for the warning,
flew down anxiously from heaven and grasped
Hannibal by the arm: 'Where are you going, O
madman? Do you seek a battle beyond mortal
powers?' So saying, she dispelled the dark mist
all about her, and revealed her true appearance.

‘It is not these Trojans you will have to deal
with, mere settlers from Laurentum. Look up,
now (for I will clear the clouds a while from
your view, and enable you to see all things)
see where that lofty hill rises in air, named
the Palatine by Evander, that Arcadian king;
it is held by Apollo, preparing for battle, his
quiver rattling, his bow already bent. See,
again, where the tall heights of the Aventine
lift among the other hills, see how the virgin
daughter of Latona, Diana, waves her torches
lit from the stream of Phlegethon, eager for
the battle, brandishing them with naked arms!
Look around you, behold, how Mars, savage
in warfare, fills the Campus named for himself.
Here Janus, there Quirinus, each god from his
own hill arrives in full array. And then regard
how fierce Jupiter shakes the aegis till it spews
fiery clouds, and feeds his anger on the flames.
Direct your eyes, dare to regard the Thunderer:
what storms, what thunder roars when he stirs
his head! What fire blazes from his eyes! Yield,
at last, to the gods, and desist from a war such
as the Giants waged.’ Speaking so, she diverted
Hannibal from his goal, restoring peace to earth
and heaven, for though a man difficult to teach
he was awed by the gods’ faces and fiery limbs.

BOOK XII:729-752 HANNIBAL RETREATS TO ROME’S DELIGHT

As he retreated, ordering his standards to be
wrenched from the ground, Hannibal looked
back and swore to return. At once, daylight
reappeared, and the sun shone more brightly
in the heavens, the quivering blue glowing
with its rays. Yet, as the Romans, watching
from the walls, saw the standards uprooted,
and Hannibal’s army in distant retreat, they

exchanged silent glances, and gestured to signal what they dared not credit given their fears; thinking that he did not mean to leave, that this was some insidious trick, a Punic tactic, while mothers kissed their babies in silence, until the army finally vanished from sight and their fears and suspicions were laid to rest. Then they flocked to the Capitoline temple and, embracing, raised their voices together, acclaiming the triumph of Tarpeian Jupiter, and decking his shrine with garlands. Then they threw open all the gates, and from every direction the people exited with delight, experiencing that pleasure long denied them. Some viewed the site where Hannibal's tent had stood, others the high seat from which he addressed his men, or the camps of the warlike Spaniards, the savage Garamantians, the wild followers of Ammon. And now they sprinkled themselves with river-water, now raised altars to the Anio's nymphs. Purifying the walls with sacrifice, they then returned joyfully to the city.

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BOOK XIII:1-29 HANNIBAL RETREATS TO THE TUTIA STREAM

The Tarpeian hill had barely vanished from sight,
when Hannibal, marching slowly, turned towards
Rome with a threatening face, preparing to return.
He camped by the Tutia, a slender stream, lacking
banks to mar the meadowlands, which flows down
silently to the Tiber. There he reproached his army
captains, the obstructive gods, and himself, saying:
'Tell me, O you who swelled the Lydian lake with
blood, and shook the land of Daunus with sounds
of conflict, where does your terror drive you now?
What sword or lance has pierced your armour? If
Carthage, that nourished us, were here now before
our eyes, her head all crowned with lofty towers,
what excuse would you give, soldiers, retreating
without a wound? "O, dear motherland, we ran
from the rain, the hailstones, and the thunder."
Banish this feminine weakness, you men of Tyre,
who cannot fight if the sky is not calm and clear.'
Fear of the gods filled them, their weapons still
smelt of sulphur, and Jupiter's wrath was before
their eyes. Yet they retained the power to obey
whatever the order, while a desire to carry their
standards back to Rome grew in the ranks, and
slowly spread through all, just as when a pebble
stirs a still pool it engenders tiny waves in rings,
and, as the trembling water shakes with further
motion, circular ripples multiply on the surface,
until finally one with extensive circumference
spreads its wide curvature from shore to shore.

BOOK XIII:30-81 DASIUS TELLS OF THE PALLADIUM

Dasius, glory and shame of Argyripa (Arpi,
founded by Diomede, son of Oeneus and king
of Aetolia, to whom this man of noble birth

traced his origin) was a sole dissenting voice.
He had allied himself to fiery Hannibal, not
trusting the rule of Rome, a wealthy citizen
but disloyal. Recalling the ancient memory
of former generations, he spoke as follows:
‘When the Greeks waged their lengthy war
against the citadel of Troy, as a bloodless
conflict stalled before the walls, Calchas
was urged to prophesy (for thus Diomede
the bravest of men, remembering the tale,
often recited it to Daunus, his father-in-law
who asked to hear it as they drank the wine)
and Calchas assured the Greeks that unless
the could carry off the Palladium, the image
of the warrior-goddess, Pallas Athene, from
the shrine in the citadel that housed it, Troy
would never yield to Menelaus’ army, nor
would Helen, Leda’s child, return to Amyclae.
For the gods had decreed that no citadel that
possessed the image could ever be conquered.
Then my ancestor, that son of Tydeus, entered
the citadel, as urged, accompanied by Ulysses,
killed the guards in the very entrance to their
shrine, carried off the sacred Palladium, and
Troy sadly fell, yet to our misfortune, since
when Diomede later founded Arpi, within
the bounds of Italy, conscience troubled him,
and he sought to placate the goddess, make
his peace with the household gods of Ilium.
A large temple was already rising on the high
citadel, a site unwelcome to Trojan Athene,
when, amidst the deep midnight silence, that
virgin goddess of Lake Tritonis appeared to
him, unveiled, saying warningly: “This work
of yours is not fit, son of Tydeus, to honour
my glory; Mount Garganus and the Daunian
lands are no place for me. Go to Laurentum,
seek the man who is laying the foundations
of a happier Troy. Take him the chaste relic

of his fathers, and the sacred ribbons." So, fearful at this warning, Diomede travelled to Saturn's realm. Meanwhile the Trojan Aeneas had founded a second Troy there at Lavinium, and hung arms from Troy in the sacred grove at Laurentum. But when Diomede reached the banks of the Tiber, and pitched his armed camp on its shore, the people of Priam trembled in their fear. Then Diomede, the son-in-law of Daunus, holding a silvery olive branch in his right hand, as a symbol of peace, spoke in this manner, as the Trojans murmured: "Son of Anchises, Aeneas, set aside the memory of anger and fear; the blood and sweat we poured out by Xanthus and Simois, Ida's rivers, and by the Scaean Gate was never our fault; we were driven by the gods and the inexorable Fates. Say why we should not spend what is left of life under happier auspices. Let us, lacking swords, clasp hands. Behold, the witness to our alliance!" And he showed, to their astonished sight, the image of the goddess on the stern-deck of his ship. And when daring Gauls penetrated the walls of Rome, she brought them death, and not a single man in all that host of thousands returned alive to the altars of his country.'

BOOK XIII:82-93 HANNIBAL HEADS FOR CALABRIA

Hannibal, disturbed by these words, ordered his men to uproot the standards, they being overjoyed, hoping to depart. They took their path to where Feronia is worshipped in her rich grove, and where the sacred waters of the river Capenas irrigate Flavina's fields. It is said that the wealth of that shrine had

grown from its ancient beginnings, through
offerings that poured in from all directions,
and its gold remained there countless years,
protected only by awe and superstitious fear.
Now its spoil corrupted barbarous hearts and
greedy minds, and filled them with contempt
for the gods. It was next decided to march far
into Calabria, to where the fields ploughed by
the Bruttians extend towards Sicilian waters.

BOOK XIII:94-114 FULVIUS ATTACKS CAPUA

While Hannibal, far from happily, headed for
Reggio's shore, Fulvius, triumphant at having
driven the invader far from his native Rome,
brought the news to besieged Capua, adding
the final touch to their misery. Seizing on
each of his men of warlike repute, he cried:
'Repel this shame with all your might; why
is Capua, a faithless second Carthage to us,
still standing, having broken our treaty and
sent Hannibal against Rome, she who sought
to claim alternate consulship, yet waits now,
defended by high turrets, for Hannibal and
his Libyans?' He backed words with action,
ordering his men to raise tall wooden towers,
high enough to top the walls, and with haste
bind beams together with iron clamps, make
rams to break the tall gates, and shake their
defensive barriers. Here, rose earth ramparts,
their sides latticed with planks, with, there,
solid canopies, showing armoured surfaces.
When all the commonly used means were
in place, he gave the signal, and ordered
his men with scaling ladders to the walls,
filling the inhabitants with fear. Suddenly,
a favourable omen smiled on his attempts.

BOOK XIII:115-137 THE WHITE DEER

There was a deer, of a colour rarely seen
on earth, whiter than snow, whiter than
swan's plumage. Capys, the founder of
Capua, when marking out the boundary
of his city with the plough, was touched
by the grateful affection of this creature,
a gift of the wild fed and tamed by man,
until it lost its former nature, and came
eagerly to its master's table, delighting
in being stroked. The women groomed
the gentle hind's flanks with a golden
comb, keeping its pure hue by bathing
it in the river. The deer became a deity
of the city and, thinking it to be Diana's
servant, the people burned incense to it
as customary. This long-lived creature
happily prolonged its span for nigh on
a thousand years undiminished, and had
counted as many centuries as this Capua
founded by the Trojan exile, when death
at last arrived after long ages. For a pack
of savage wolves had entered the city in
the depths of night, a wretched omen in
time of war, and the deer, startled by this
sudden influx, had fled, at dawn, through
the gates, seeking the nearby fields in fear.
Fulvius' men, delighting in the chase, had
captured it, and he offered it in sacrifice to
you, Diana, as a most welcome offering to
you, praying: 'Latona, assist my enterprise.'

BOOK XIII:138-152 TAUREA CHALLENGES CLAUDIUS

So then, trusting in the goddess, Fulvius
swiftly advanced his troops surrounding

besieged Capua, and where the circuit of
the walls curved outwards round a spur,
he ringed it with a dense fortified cordon
like a beast penned in by hunters' spears.
Though the Capuans trembled, Taurea,
who, as even Hannibal admitted, hurled
his spear in battle more vigorously than
any of his own Moors or Autololes, rode
from the gate, his plume nodding on high
as he managed the power of his foaming
steed, for the horse was restive, refusing
to hold still amidst the trumpet-blare, yet
his rider reigned him in by force, then as
he found himself within enemy hearing,
shouted across: 'If he trusts in his right
arm let Claudius himself (the swordsman
had gained glory in a thousand battles)
meet me in single combat on this field.'

BOOK XIII:153-190 CLAUDIUS DEFEATS TAUREA

When this reached the Roman's ears, he
waited only for the leader to give his
blessing and grant him leave to fight,
since the men were forbidden, on pain
of death, to duel on their own account.
When Fulvius released him, Claudius
rushed forward with delight, galloping
over the open plain raising a billowing
cloud of dust. Taurea, disdaining use
of a knotted strap or thong to increase
the force of his missile, brandished his
spear then, furious with rage, hurled it
through the air with his unaided arm.
But Claudius was of a different mind,
examining the other's armour closely
for some gap a spear might penetrate.
He would brandish his weapon, then

make a feint of striking, yet pierced the centre of Taurea's shield at last, though his eager spear was cheated of any blood. He drew his sword swiftly from its sheath, as Taurea, fleeing imminent death, spurred on his flying steed. But Claudius was swifter in pursuit of his retreating foe, and pressed the fugitive at full gallop. Both reached the gates, one driven on by fear; his pursuer by rage, desire for glory, and a thirst for the blood that was his due. And now the Capuans could scarce believe their eyes, doubting their own senses, on seeing a lone enemy rider gallop boldly through the town; yet, while they watched in trepidation, he rode unafraid through their midst, then, exiting by another gate, he returned safely to his own ranks. Now every Roman heart burned with common purpose, and an equal eagerness to pierce the walls and force their way within. Spears and firebrands flared together. Stones fell in showers, as spears rose to the battlements. Nor could any man readily distinguish himself by his valour, since ardour lent force to every arm. Arrows flew through the air to the city's centre. Fulvius rejoiced at needing to offer no further encouragement or appeal, for one and all were eager for battle, and noting their spirit, and that each man took the lead himself, he hurled his forces against the gates, while he himself sought the chance for glory.

BOOK XIII:191-218 THREE CAPUAN BROTHERS

Three brothers, equal in age, guarded
the gate, each with a chosen band of
a hundred men to keep watch and hold
station together. Of the three, Numitor
excelled in beauty, Laurens in swiftness
of foot, and Taburnus in size and stature.
They were not armed alike: the first was
a skilled archer; the second brandished
a spear with a poisonous tip, not trusting
to naked steel alone; while Taburnus was
skilled at hurling fire-brands and torches.
They equalled Geryon, that triple-bodied
monster, savage in his anger, who lived,
it is said, on the Atlantic shore, whose
three right arms bore different weapons:
one hurled fierce fire-brands, another,
behind it, fired a bow, while the third
shook a mighty spear. When Fulvius
spied the three brothers fighting thus,
a heap of their victims round the gate,
the gate-posts crimson with his men's
blood, he shook his spear and hurled it.
Made of Italian yew, it cleft the air apart,
bringing cruel death, piercing Numitor
in the side exposed by his lifted arm as
he raised his bow to rain down arrows.
Now Virrius, wildly daring but reckless
in war, was not content to fight within
the confines of the wall but, heedless in
his fervour, opened the gates and burst
onto the plain, delivering his unlucky
followers to the rage of the triumphant
Romans, for Scipio had rushed to meet
their charge and, insatiable in his fury,
now dealt oblivion to the opposing ranks.

BOOK XIII:219-255 THE DEFENDERS RETREAT TO THE TOWN

Tifata's shady hill had borne and nurtured
a fierce warrior, Calenus, his spirit no less
mighty than his body. He often surprised
a lion in its lair, or went bare-headed into
battle, or wrestled with a bull and forced
the angry creature's horns to the ground,
winning glory by such wild deeds. When
Virrius exited headlong through the gates,
Calenus followed, without his breastplate
scorning such, or seeking to lose no time;
and lighter than the Romans, breathless
in their heavy armour, he scattered them
in defeat. He quickly speared Veliturnus
in the guts, and felled Marius with a rock
torn from the soil, that Marius who would
tilt with his peer Scipio at the equestrian
games and now, expiring in agony, cried
to his friend for aid, as his gaping mouth
was crushed by the stone. Savage grief
doubled Scipio's strength; as he wept
he hurled his sounding spear, eager for
his friend to find solace for his fall by
witnessing his enemy's death. The spear,
flashing like a bird through the clear air,
pierced Calenus' chest and tore at his
huge frame: such is the power released
by a swift Liburnian galley on the deep
when the oarsmen draw back their oars,
to strike the water in unison with their
blades and, flying faster than the wind,
she is driven more than her own length
through the waves, with a single stroke.
Now Volesus had thrown aside his own
shield so as to attack the city the sooner,
and overtook Ascanius as he fled over
the open plain. He severed Ascanius'
neck with his sword, the head falling

at the man's feet, while with the speed
of his flight his headless corpse fell
further on. The besieged had no hope
of defending the walls with open gates
and, beating a retreat to the town, they
shamelessly excluded their comrades
as they begged to be admitted, turning
those gates on their hinges, thrusting
home the bolts, though that measure
came too late. The Romans only pressed
home their attack on the besieged city
more fiercely, and if black night had
not hidden the earth in her dark folds
would have swiftly forced an entrance.

BOOK XIII:256-278 VIRRIUS CONTEMPLATES SUICIDE

But darkness brought an unequal rest to
the two armies. On one side, untroubled
sleep such as the victor knows, while in
Capua, echoing with the mournful cries
and the howls of grief of the women, and
the anxious moans of troubled senators,
they prayed for an end to their suffering
and hardship. Virrius, who had led them
into treachery, was dismayed. Believing
there to be no hope of the Carthaginians
rescuing them, and driving the desire for
life from his heart, he spoke to the Capuan
senate: 'I hoped we would rule all Italy, I
promised that, if fortune and the gods were
to favour the Carthaginian armies, Trojan
Quirinus' rule would yield to that of Capua.
I led Hannibal to attack the walls of Rome
with its Tarpeian citadel, and I demanded,
with vigour, that one of the two consuls be
from Capua, bearing the rods of office and
ranking with his colleague. It is enough to

have lived thus far. While night lasts, let
any man who would wish freedom as his
eternal companion by Acheron's waters,
join me at table now, and so dine with me;
there the wine spreading through his body
will drown the senses, death's harshness
will be soothed, he shall swallow the one
cure for defeat, and disarm fate by means
of that gentle poison.' So saying, he went
home, with a host of senators for company.
And a vast oak pyre was raised at the heart
of his mansion, to receive them after death.

BOOK XIII:279-298 THE DEATH OF VIRRIUS

Meanwhile the people were mad with fear
and rage. Now, too late, they remembered
Decius and that harsh punishment of exile
for his great courage. The goddess Fidelity
looked down from on high and troubled
their wayward hearts. A strange voice was
heard filling all the air, saying: 'Mortals,
never break your treaties, with the sword,
but keep true faith, for it gleams brighter
than the purple robes of kings. He, who
delights in breaking his word in times
of trouble, and betrays a friend's tenuous
hopes, he, his household, his wife, his
life itself, shall never be free of grief and
tears: Fidelity, whom he despised, whom
he violated, shall hound him always by
day and night, by land and sea, forever.'
And now a Fury attended every gathering,
reclining on their couches at every meal,
boldly sharing their feasts. She herself it
was who handed a foaming cup of fatal
venom to every guest, and generously
offered them their sentence of death.

Meanwhile Virrius, granting time for
the poison to reach his inmost parts,
ascended the pyre, embraced all those
comrades choosing to die with him,
and ordered the fire to be swiftly lit.

BOOK XIII:299-325 THE ROMANS SPARE CAPUA

Towards dawn, the Romans attacked.
Soon the Capuans saw Milo topping
the battlements, calling to his friends
to follow. Then the terrified citizens
opened the gates, and those senators
who had lacked the courage to escape
punishment by seeking death made
their way to the enemy camp, their
steps faltering. The city lay open,
the Capuans confessed their error
and disclosed those homes polluted
in housing Carthaginians as guests.
Women and children flocked around
the Roman force, grieving senators,
and those for whom none shed tears.
The Roman soldiers stood, propped
on their javelins, gazing at these men
who, incapable of dealing with either
prosperity or loss, now swept the very
ground, beards down to their chests,
and bowed their grey hairs in the dust,
weeping pathetically, uttering shameful
prayers for mercy, and filling the air
with cries like the women. But while
the soldiers wondered at such weakness
and waited eagerly for the command to
raze the walls, a sudden feeling of awe
silently filled their hearts, and a divine
power quenched their savage thoughts,
rendering them loth to hurl the brands

that would reduce the temples to ashes
in the conflagration. A merciful deity
gradually informed their inmost hearts.
Invisible to the eye, he brought them
all to know that Capys had founded
that proud city long ago, and that it
was wise to leave places fit for human
habitation in that vast extent of plain.
Slowly anger died in those fierce hearts,
and their readiness for violence weakened.

BOOK XIII:326-347 PAN WAS SENT BY JOVE

It was Pan whom Jove, in his desire to save
a city of Trojan foundation, had sent there,
Pan who always appears to stand on tiptoe,
whose hooves of horn barely imprint the soil.
His right hand toys with a strip of Arcadian
goat-skin and gently lashes festive crowds
at cross-roads. Pine needles wreathe his hair
and shade his temples, while a pair of horns
sprout from his reddened brow. His ears are
pointed, and a rough beard hangs from his
chin. He carries a shepherd's crook, while
a soft deer-skin offers a welcome covering
to his left-side. There is no high precipice
so steep and inhospitable he cannot keep
balance there, like some winged creature,
making his way down its untrodden slopes
on those hooves of horn. Sometimes he
turns and laughs at the antics of the hairy
tail that grows behind him, raises a hand
to keep the sun from scorching his brow,
and surveys the pastures with shaded eyes.
Now, having carried out Jove's command,
calmed wild passions, softened fierce hearts,
he swiftly returned to the Arcadian glades,
and that Mount Maenalus so dear to him,

where, on the sacred height, he sends sweet
music far and wide from his melodious pipe,
and draws all the distant flocks to his song.

BOOK XIII:348-360 THE ROMANS PLUNDER THE CITY

Ordered to do by their general, the Roman
soldiers left the gates unburned, the walls
standing, his clemency doing him honour,
and put aside their swords and fire-brands.
Then much plunder emerged from the gods'
temples and the houses gleaming with gold,
all the appurtenances of luxury, goods that
had harmed their owners, feminine apparel
stripped from the backs of men, tables of
cypress-wood from abroad, and cups with
pearls from the east to incite extravagance.
There was no end of plate, silver or heavy
embossed gold, for their banquets, long
lines of slaves everywhere, and coinage
enough to wage a lengthy war, all taken
from the houses, with immense hordes of
servants who had waited on the wealthy.

BOOK XIII:361-380 FULVIUS HONOURS MILO: TAUREA COMMITS SUICIDE

When Fulvius sounded the recall to end
the soldiers' licence, being one quick to
reward brave deeds, he spoke, from his
high seat: 'Come now, Milo of Lanuvium,
whom Juno the Preserver gifted us, receive
the honour Mars confers on the conqueror,
this turreted crown to encircle your head.'
Then he summoned those nobles meriting
the chief punishment, who atoned for their
guilt beneath the executioner's axe, though
Taurea, with indomitable courage (a noble

action should never be hidden even though performed by an enemy) cried out in anger: ‘Shall you take with impunity, by the axe, a far greater life than yours? By your order, shall the lictor place a hero’s severed head at the feet of cowards? Never shall heaven grant you that!’ Then facing his judge, with a fierce stare and frenzied laugh, he swiftly drove his faithful sword through his own chest. Fulvius replied: ‘Dying with your city, share her fall! Mars has determined our courage and our skill in warfare. You, if you thought it shameful to face justice, might readily have chosen to die fighting.’

BOOK XIII:381-416 SCIPIO CONSULTS THE PRIESTESS AT CUMAE

While Capua atoned in blood for her fatal error, cruel Fortune, who mingles sorrow with joy, had slain Scipio’s father and his uncle in Spain, ornaments of their country and now its grief. Young Scipio himself, then chanced to be taking leave at Puteoli. After the fight, while revisiting his home, the news of their untimely deaths brought bitter tears. Though unaccustomed to yield to misfortune, he beat at his flesh now, and tore violently at his clothes. Not the efforts of his friends, nor thought for his seniority and duty to command, could restrain him: but his affection for his family raged against the cruelty of the heavens, he refusing solace. Day after day was lost in lament. The faces of the dead were before his eyes. Therefore he determined to summon up their shades, the spirits of those dear to him, and soothe his endless sorrow by speaking with them. Encouraged by the proximity of that marsh

where the stagnant waters of Acheron mark
the foul descent to Avernus, his mind was
eager to learn the secrets of years unborn.
So he made his way to Cumae, whose cave
and sacred tripods were ruled by Autonoe,
Apollo's priestess, and revealed the desire
of his sad heart; asking to see his kinsmen
face to face. Without delay, that prophetess
spoke to him: 'Sacrifice black-fleeced sheep
at midnight, as the customary offerings to
the dead; open a trench to receive the blood
of the still-breathing victims. Then the pale
kingdom will reveal your dear ones to you.
For the rest, I will elicit an oracular reply
from the Elysian Fields themselves for you,
and grant you the sight, at your sacrifice, of
the shade of the ancient Sibyl who reveals
Apollo's mind. Off with you, go, and when
dew-drenched night has passed the middle
of her course, then, purified, seek the gorge
of Avernus nearby, driving on the victims
I named as sacrifices to placate harsh Dis.
Take honey, and an offering of pure wine.'

BOOK XIII:417-465 SCIPIO SUMMONS THE SHADES

Encouraged by her advice and the promise
of the Sibyl's aid, Scipio prepared in secret
to offer the victims prescribed. Then, when
night had reached the appointed hour, and
the darkness past was equal to that to come,
he left his bed, journeying to the turbulent
threshold of the gate to Tartarus, where he
found the priestess, as she had promised,
seated in a deep corner of the Stygian cave.
Then, she led the youth to where the earth
lies open, and the abyss hateful to heaven
yawns as acrid air is exhaled from Cocytus'

marsh, and urged him to swiftly dig a trench
with his sword, and sacrifice the victims in
due order, while she breathed arcane words.
Firstly, a black bull was offered to the king
of the underworld, and then a virgin heifer
to Proserpine, Enna's goddess. And lastly,
black-fleeced sheep were killed in honour
of Alecto and Megaera the unsmiling Fury,
with an offering of honey, milk and wine.
'Stand firm, O youth,' the priestess cried,
'endure the sight of those who rise from
Erebus: I feel Tartarus approaching while
the third realm offers itself to our vision.
Behold, forms of all kind flock to us, and
all humankind who were born and have
died since primal chaos: soon all shall be
revealed, Cyclopes and Scylla and those
Thracian horses that fed on human flesh.
Solicit the dead and, all undaunted, clasp
your unsheathed blade: if any shades seek
to drink the blood, before the virgin form
of the Sibyl advances, cut them to pieces.
Meanwhile behold that unburied spirit who
approaches swiftly wishing to address you;
it is granted him, since the funeral flames
have not yet consumed his body, to speak
as once he did, without tasting the blood.'
Scipio looked, and was appalled at that
sudden sight: 'Mighty general, what dire
event has robbed your suffering country
of you, when harsh war calls for such men
as you, Appius Claudius, yielding to none
in courage or skill? Ten dawns have passed
since I returned from Capua, where you were
being treated, your sole regret was that your
wounds prevented you from reaching the city,
so sharing the glory of that victory.' Appius
replied: 'The very next day of pain, the sun
turned his welcome steeds away, and I sank
to the dark eternal stream. And yet my pious

friends remain slow to act, seeking to observe
the idle rites and superstitions of the populace
by delaying the burning of my corpse, so as
to bear my body to its far-off ancestral tomb.
Therefore I beg you, by our rivalry in deeds
of arms, keep away those balms that prevent
putrefaction, and permit my wandering spirit
to enter Hades, as soon as it may be allowed.'

BOOK XIII:466-493 THE DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD

Now custom varies in this matter throughout
the world, various views prompting various
ways of disposing of the dead or their ashes.
In Spain, they say, the bodies of the dead are
consumed by the loathsome vultures, such
being the ancient custom. In Hyrcania, if
a king dies, they grant the dogs access to his
corpse. The Egyptians enclose their dead,
standing them upright in stone coffins to
be worshipped, and displaying a bloodless
phantom at the funeral feast, as warning.
The Black Sea tribes empty the skull by
extracting the brain, preserving the body,
embalmed, for centuries. The Garamantes
dig a hole in the sand and bury it naked,
while the Nasamonians of Libya commit
their dead for burial to the merciless depths
of the sea. And the impious Celts surround
the bones of the empty skull with gold, and
use it as a drinking-cup during their feasts.
The Athenians passed a law that the bodies
of all who fell in war defending their land
should burn together on a communal pyre.
While again, among the Scythians, the dead
are tied to tree trunks and allowed to fester
and to rot, as time slowly disposes of them.
Thus Scipio replied: 'O noblest descendant
of ancient Clausus, no cares of my own, and

I have many indeed, shall take precedence over this request of yours.' While they were speaking, the shade of the Sibyl advanced, and Autonoe ordered them to cease: 'Here, she cried, 'here, is the prophetess and fount of truth, to whom so much is known that Apollo himself knows little more. The time has come for me and your band of followers to depart, and place the victims in the fire.'

BOOK XIII:494-516 THE SIBYL OF CUMAE PROPHESIES

Now, when the aged Sibyl of Cumae, full of secrets, had tasted and sipped of these victims' blood, she gazed on the handsome face of the young warrior, saying: 'While I enjoyed the light above, I was not reluctant to speak, my voice sounded for the people from the Cumaean cave. Then I prophesied of you, and your part in the future days of Rome. Yet your Romans were not worthy to receive my truths; for your ancestors lacked the sense to acquire and preserve my words. But listen and learn now, my son, since you desire knowledge, of your own destiny and that of Rome which is dependent on yours. For I see you are keen to seek a forecast of your fate, and meet your kinsmen's shades. Trusted early with command you shall win a battle on the Ebro and avenge your father, ending, with the sword, the Carthaginians' triumphs, and when you have conquered their New Carthage in Spain you shall treat that as an omen for the war. Then you will be chosen as consul, and Jove will protect you until he has driven those invaders back to African shores, and led Hannibal to you, and to defeat. Shame then on the iniquitous

citizens who will rob you of your home and
country, you the hero who shall have forged
such deeds!' Such the utterance of the Sibyl,
as she turned now towards Hades' dark pools.

BOOK XIII:517-561 THE SIBYL DESCRIBES THE AFTERLIFE

Then Scipio spoke: 'However harsh a fate time
brings, I shall stand firm, if only my conscience
be clear. But, I pray, Virgin prophetess, known
to fame, since your aim is ever to aid humanity
in its troubles, stay your steps a while to name
the silent shades, reveal the dread Stygian realm.'
She consented, but then added: 'The sight of that
kingdom is not to be desired, there the countless
generations past dwell in the darkness, flitting
among the shadows. The one place houses all.
At its centre, a wide and empty region extends,
and driven there by the commonality of Death
are all things earth, sea, or fiery air nurtured
since the world's beginning: all descend, and
the barren plain has room for all the dead and
those yet to come. Round the realm there are
ten gates: one admits warriors, born to war's
harsh lot; a second is for those who gave laws
and noted judgements to their nations, and
were the first to found walled cities; a third
is for honest rural folk, those dear to Ceres,
who die all untouched by poisonous deceit.
The fourth is for those who invented joyful
arts and the life of civilisation, uttering song
not unworthy of their father Apollo, serving
his abode. The fifth, which is called the gate
of shipwreck, receives those fierce wind and
storm destroy. The sixth opens for that vast
congregation who are weighed down by sin
but confess their guilt; Rhadamanthus there,
at the very entrance, demands punishment,

and he supervises the empty realm of death.
The seventh gate opens to bands of women,
and here chaste Proserpine tends her moist
groves. And the eighth gate is known for its
crying infants; and the countless babes that
died on the threshold of life; and the maids
whose wedding torches had lit their funeral
instead. Next, in a place apart, radiant, where
darkness dies, stands the ninth gate, shining,
leading by a secret shady path to the Elysian
Fields; here is the crowd of virtuous people,
in no Stygian realm, but beyond the stream
of Ocean, beside Lethe's sacred spring, where
they drink its waters, and cleanse their minds.
Last is the tenth gate of glittering gold, all
blessed with light, gleaming as if the moon
swam there. By this, the spirits seek heaven
once more, and after five thousand years are
done, oblivious to Hades, enter new bodies.
From gate to gate wanders pale Death, with
hideous gaping jaws, ever pacing to and fro.'

BOOK XIII:562-594 THE PALACE OF DIS

'Then in the distance lies a lifeless morass,
with muddy pools; here fierce Phlegethon's
overflowing waters scorch its banks, rolling
fiery rocks down with roaring blasts of flame.
In another place, Cocytus rushes furiously
along, with eddies of dark blood foaming
as it flows. Then the Styx, by which even
the gods and their ruler deign to swear, its
dreadful streams of pitch, its sulphurous
steaming flow. Acheron is worse, seething
with poisons and clotted venom, spouting
frozen sand with a rumbling noise, slowly
following its dark course through stagnant
pools. Triple-jawed Cerberus drinks from

this foul stream; it is Tisiphone's draught,
that black Megaera thirsts for, though no
draught can quench her fury. Last of all,
a fount of tears rises before the entrance
to Dis' palace, the inexorable threshold.
What a crowd, every monster housed in
its courtyard, keep watch, frightening
the shades with their mingled murmurs!
Consuming Grief is there; Emaciation
the servant that attends on fatal disease;
Sorrow that feeds on tears, and bloodless
Pallor; Anxiety and Deceit and querulous
Old Age; Envy strangling her own self,
and Poverty, a deformity that leads men
to crime; Error, with unsure step is there,
and Discord happy to mingle sea and sky.
There too sits Briareus, to open Dis' gate
with his hundred hands; and the Sphinx,
her virgin mouth all stained with blood;
and Scylla; the fierce Centaurs; Giants'
ghosts. Cerberus is here and when he
bursts his bonds, and roams Tartarus,
not even Alecto, or Megaera who births
madness, dares to face that fierce hound,
who, his thousand chains once snapped,
wraps his viperous tail round his loins.'

BOOK XIII:595-614 THE THRONE OF DIS

'On the right, a vast yew reveals dense
foliage on spreading branches, denser
for Cocytus' nurturing wave. Here are
birds of ill-omen: vultures that feed on
carrion; stares of owls, the screech-owls'
with blood-stained feathers; while Harpies
nest here, clinging close on every branch;
the tree echoing to their harsh cries. Here,
among these shapes, and seated on high,

Dis, the husband of the Avernian Juno,
Proserpine, tries guilty kings, who stand
before their judge in chains, repenting all
too late of their crimes, while Furies and
Punishments of every form hover around.
How those kings wish their proud sceptres
had never glittered! Those shades who in
the life above suffered unjust, undeserved
punishment now mock their harsh rulers,
allowed at last to utter those complaints
they could not express when alive. Then
one king is bound to the rock with iron
fetters, another rolls a stone up a steep
mountain slope, while a third is lashed
eternally by Megaera's snaky scourge.
Such the punishments that await those
death-dealing tyrants.' 'Now, the Sibyl
said, 'it is time to look on your mother's
face, her shade the first to come apace.'

BOOK XIII:615-649 SCIPIO MEETS HIS MOTHER'S SHADE

Pomponia, his mother, stood near, Jove's
secret love. For when Venus found Punic
weapons were rising against Rome, she
laboured to pre-empt Juno's wiles, and
kindle a slow flame in her father's heart,
and without her foresight a Carthaginian
virgin would now be tending Vesta's fire.
And, once her shade had sipped the blood,
and the Sibyl had advised her and allowed
the two of them to recognise one another,
Scipio began: 'O, my dear mother, sacred
to me as a mighty goddess, how gladly I
would have sought the Stygian darkness,
and entered on death, for this sight of you!
What a fate was mine, when my first day
snatched you, unceremoniously, from me,

and bore you to the grave!' And Pomponia
replied: 'O, my son, my death involved no
suffering; I, once delivered of your divine
burden, was led by Mercury, Cyllene's god,
by Jupiter's command, with gentle hand,
to a place of true honour in Elysium, where
Leda and Alcmene, Hercules' mother, are
granted residence. But listen now, my son,
and learn at last what I am given leave to
disclose, the secret of your birth, and then
no battle will terrify you, and you may be
sure of rising to heaven through your actions.
The sleep I needed, to rest myself, came upon
me at noon, I chancing to be alone. Suddenly
my limbs were clasped in an embrace, yet not
the usual familiar union as when my husband
came to me. Then, through half-opened eyes
filled with sleep, I saw, believe it, Jupiter
in radiant light. Nor did the god's disguise
deceive me, though he had changed himself
into a snaky serpent twining the vast folds
of his coils behind him. But it was not given
me to live on after your birth. Ah, what grief
that was, my spirit passing before I could tell
you of these things!' Scipio sought, eagerly,
to embrace his mother's neck, but three times
her insubstantial shadow escaped his grasp.

BOOK XIII:650-686 SCIPIO MEETS THE SHADE OF HIS FATHER, PUBLIUS

The forms of two loving brothers, his father
and his uncle replaced hers. Scipio hastened
through the gloom, seeking to embrace them,
yet in vain, for the spirits that he tried to clasp
were like mist or drifting smoke. 'Dear father,'
he cried, 'what god so hated Latium that they
snatched you away, the pillar of Roman rule?
Alas! Why was I ever unfeeling enough to be

absent for a moment from your side? I should
rather have died protecting you. How deeply
the people of Italy mourn your death! Now
a double tomb, decreed by the Senate, rises,
to honour you both, on Mars' grassy field.'
Permitting him no more words, they now
began their reply, as he was still speaking.
His father's shade spoke first: 'Virtue is
truly its own reward, and the very noblest,
yet the dead find it sweet when the glory
of their lives endures among the living,
when their praise is not lost to oblivion.
But tell us, fair ornament of our house,
of the weight war burdens you with. Alas,
how often terror grips me when I recall
how fierce you were when true danger
threatened! Be warned now by our deaths,
O bravest of the brave, and restrain your
ardour in battle. Let your kin be a lesson
to you. Eight summers had witnessed
the threshing of those ripe ears of corn,
rattling in the fields, since all Spain fell
under my control, and my brother had
made the people pass beneath the yoke.
We had rebuilt the walls and houses of
unhappy Saguntum, and made it viable
to drink the Guadalquivir's waters free
of hostilities and, time and again, had
forced Hannibal's indomitable brother,
Hasdrubal, to retreat. I was pursuing
him as victor, he being weakened by
defeat, when suddenly the Spanish
troops (alas, barbarians are ever vile
traitors) a mercenary crew whom he
now seduced with Libyan gold, broke
their ranks and deserted our standards.
Abandoned by our allies we were then
far inferior to our enemy in numbers,
and a dense mass of them encircled us.

Yet we did not die without seeking our
revenge, my son, we fought to the last
that day, and ended our lives in glory.'

BOOK XIII:687-704 AFTER HIS FATHER, HIS UNCLE, GNAEUS, SPEAKS

Then Gnaeus, the brother, added the tale
of his own death: 'At the end, and in dire
straits, I sought the safety of a high tower
to fight my last battle there. A thousand
torches and smoking brands were hurled
at its walls, and the conflagration spread.
I have no quarrel with the gods regarding
my fate: my body was burned in no mean
pyre, retaining arms and armour in death.
But it grieves me lest the disaster, that saw
we two brothers die, means that Spain has
been lost to Carthaginian attack.' With his
eyes wet with tears, the young hero replied:
'I pray, you gods, that Carthage may yet be
punished as she deserves for such things.
Yet the fierce tribes of the Pyrenees are
now contained by Marcius Septimus. That
outstanding warrior, who proved himself in
your army, protected our weary troops, and
carries on the war. There is even news that
he has routed the Carthaginians in battle,
exacting payment for your death.' Pleased
at his words, the two generals returned to
those pleasant haunts of the blessed, while
Scipio's gaze followed them with respect.

BOOK XIII:705-720 THE SHADE OF PAULLUS

Now Paullus approached, hard to recognise
in the deep shadows, drank of the blood, and
spoke: 'Light of Italy, whose actions in war,

more than any one man's, I saw at Cannae,
what impels you to enter the dark and visit
a kingdom to be seen but once, and forever?'
Scipio answered: 'Mighty captain, how long
all of Rome has mourned your death! How
close you were to dragging the city to these
Stygian shadows with you, in your downfall!
Even our Punic enemies built a tomb for your
corpse, and sought glory, in honouring you.'
While Paullus shed tears to hear of such a
burial, Flaminius appeared to Scipio's gaze,
then Gracchus, and the sad face of Servilius,
dead at Cannae. Scipio was keen to call to
them and speak with them, but his desire
to see the shades of past heroes prevailed.

BOOK XIII:721-751 SCIPIO SEES PAST HEROES, AND MEETS HAMILCAR'S SHADE

Thus he saw Junius Brutus who gained
lasting fame through the merciless axe,
in condoning his sons' execution; then
Camillus, peer of the gods in glory, and
Manius Curius who had no love for gold.
The Sibyl revealed their name and aspect
as each appeared: 'Blind Claudius Caecus
there drove Pyrrhus' envoy from his door,
rejecting the king's deceitful bid for peace;
and there is Horatio who withstood a king,
Lars Porsena, who brought war to Tiber's
shores and, whilst the bridge was destroyed
behind him, he alone thwarted the return of
the kings by his courage. If you would see
he who forged the peace after the First War
with Carthage, there stands Lutatius, noted
winner with his fleet of the great naval battle.
If you would meet fierce Hamilcar's shade,
that is he (visible far off), whose face still
retains that look of harsh resentment after

death. If you would wish to speak with him,
let him first sip the blood in silence.' Once
leave had been granted, and the shade had
quenched his thirst, Scipio, with frowning
face, began reproaching him: 'O father of
deceit, is this how you keep your treaties?
Is this what you agreed when a prisoner
in Sicily? Your son, Hannibal, breaks all
pacts, and wages war throughout our Italy,
piercing all barriers, fights his way over
the Alps to us, and all the land is aflame
with barbaric warfare, and rivers, choked
with dead, run backwards to their source.'
The Carthaginian replied: 'The boy had
barely completed his tenth year when he
committed at my request to make war on
Rome, nor may he betray those gods his
father swore by. If he is laying Italy waste
with fire and trying to overthrow Rome's
power, O true son of mine, O loyal to me,
O warrior faithful to your oath, I pray you
may regain the glory that we lost!' Then,
with his head held high, Hamilcar departed
swiftly, his shade seeming taller as it went.

BOOK XIII:752-777 THE SHADES OF ALEXANDER AND CROESUS

Now the Sibyl pointed out the Decemvirs,
those who, armed, gave laws to the people
at their request, and first sought to employ
Athenian statutes to frame our Italian law.
Scipio viewed them with delight, gazing
insatiably and would have spoken to them
all but the mighty priestess reminded him
of the innumerable crowd of shades: 'My
son, how many thousands do you think
have descended to Erebus from above,
while you yourself gaze at a single one?

In no time at all, an overflowing torrent
of the dead arrive, and Charon ferries a
crowd across in his spacious bark, that
is nevertheless insufficient for them all.'
Then the Sibyl pointed to a young man,
saying: 'That is Alexander, who roamed
with his armies over every land; he who
traversed Bactra and the Dahaean realm,
who drank of the Ganges' stream; that
Macedonian who bridged the Niphates,
whose city stands on the sacred Nile.'
Scipio addressed him: 'O true-born son
of Libyan Ammon, since your fame has
undoubtedly eclipsed all other generals',
and since my heart is on fire with that
same thirst for glory, tell me the path by
which you rose to that proud summit,
the topmost pinnacle of renown.' And
Alexander replied: 'Cunning, coupled
with caution, shames a general. Daring
is essential in war. Hurry time onward
when you undertake great things; dark
death hovers above you while you act.'
So saying, he departed. Next the shade
of Croesus flitted by, a rich man once,
above, yet one now beggared by death.

BOOK XIII:778-797 THE SHADE OF HOMER

But Scipio next saw a figure, whose hair
was bound with purple ribbon and flowed
about his gleaming neck, at the threshold
of Elysium. 'Tell me, priestess,' he asked:
'who is this, whose sacred brow shines
with an incomparable light, and a host of
spirits follow him, and surround him with
cries of wonder and delight? See his face!
If he were not here, in the Stygian darkness,

I would have said indeed he must be a god!'
'You are not deceived,' the wise attendant
of Diana said; 'for he merits being thought
divine, no little genius existed in that great
mind. His verse embraced sky, sea, earth,
and the underworld; equalling the Muses
in song and Apollo in majesty. Indeed, he
revealed this region to mortals before ever
he himself saw it, and raised your Troy to
the stars.' Scipio gazed with joyful eyes at
Homer's shade, saying: 'If fate permitted
that he might now sing of Rome's deeds
to our world, how much deeper an effect
those might have on future generations
our own descendants would bear witness!
Happy an Achilles revealed to the world
by such a poet; made greater by his song!'

BOOK XIII:798-852 HEROES, HEROINES AND OTHERS

When Scipio asked who those were who
came now from the vast crowd, he was told
they were the shades of heroes, the mighty
among the dead. He gazed at the invincible
Achilles in wonder, and great Hector; while
Ajax' vast stride and the venerable aspect
of Nestor stirred his admiration. He looked
in delight at the two Atridae, Agamemnon
and Menelaus, and at Ulysses the Ithacan,
whose judgement was as great as Achilles'
deeds. Next he saw the shade of Castor,
Leda's son, ready to return above, where
Pollux his brother enjoyed his turn at life.
Suddenly his gaze was attracted to Lavinia,
she being pointed out to him, for the Sibyl
advised him now was the time to meet with
the ghosts of women, for if he delayed dawn
might summon him to depart. 'Lavinia was

happy,' she said, 'as Venus' daughter-in-law,
and the fruits of her marriage bound Latins
and Trojans together for all the ages to come.
Do you see there, Hersilia, wed to Quirinus,
the son of Mars? When the Sabines rejected
the Romans as husbands for their women,
she was carried off by a Roman shepherd,
entered his hut and was happy to share his
bed of straw, calling for the Sabine men
to throw down their weapons. See where
Carmentis comes, the mother of Evander,
her prophecies hinted at this present war.
And you may look on the face of Tanaquil,
the wife of the elder Tarquin; pure of heart
she too had a gift for prophecy, foretelling
her husband's reign and the gods' favour,
from the flight of birds. Behold Lucretia,
the glory of Roman chastity, noted for her
death, see her gaze fixed upon the ground.
Nor, alas, did Rome long enjoy her claim,
one to be respected above all others, see
Virginia beside her, blood-stained breasts
revealing her wound, sad emblem of a
virginity kept intact by the sword, for she
approved her father's action in inflicting
that sorry blow. There is Cloelia, the girl
who swam the Tiber and, in disregarding
her gender, impressed the Etruscan army,
such that Rome once prayed to have sons
such as she.' But now an appalling sight
met Scipio's eyes, such that he asked who
was the guilty shade, what the reason for
her punishment, and the priestess replied:
'Tullia was the daughter of Servius Tullius,
she who drove her chariot wheels over her
father's mutilated body, reigning back her
horses above his still-quivering features;
therefore she swims the fiery Phlegethon,
with never an end to her suffering, those

waters rush furiously from dark furnaces,
carrying red-hot rocks up from the depths,
the burning stones striking her in the face.
And the other, whose heart-strings are torn
by an eagle's beak (oh, listen to the sound
of those flapping wings as Jove's armour-
bearer returns to its meal) is Tarpeia, she
was guilty of a monstrous crime, loving
gold and forging a pact with the Sabines
to open the gates of Rome. Near her (as
you see: no trivial offences are punished
here!) Orthrus, a two-headed hound who
once guarded Geryon's castle, barks with
famished jaws at a victim, seeks to bite
and eviscerate her with his filthy claws:
nevertheless the penalty fails to match
the crime for, a priestess of Vesta, she
lost her virginity, polluting the shrine.
But enough, enough of all such sights.'
Then she added: 'Now I shall finish by
showing you a few of those spirits who
drink forgetfulness here, before I return
to the darkness. Here is Marius: soon he
will return to the world above, from small
beginnings he will rise to hold a lengthy
spell of power as consul. Nor can Sulla
long delay the call, drinking the waters
of oblivion. Life summons him to that
destiny no god can alter. He will be first
to seize supreme power, although none
who ascend to such greatness will ever
follow Sulla's example, criminal though
he was, and boast as he of surrendering it.
That handsome head with its fleecy hair
rising from a forehead dear to the world,
is Pompey's. He with lofty brow crowned
with a star is Caesar, descendant of gods,
scion of Trojan Iulus. When those two
erupt at last from their seclusion in Hades,

they will trouble both land and sea! Alas,
poor wretches, how you will battle, over
the whole earth! And the winner will pay
no less dearly for his crimes than the loser!'

BOOK XIII:853-895 THE SIBYL PROPHESIES HANNIBAL'S FUTURE

Scipio replied, in tears: 'I lament the harsh
fate in store for the Roman people. Yet if,
far from the light, there is no forgiveness,
if death itself brings the suffering deserved,
in what waves of Phlegethon shall cursed
Hannibal not burn for his treachery, what
bird's beak not rightly lacerate that flesh,
forever renewed?' 'Have no fear,' the Sibyl
cried, 'life itself shall not prove untroubled
for such a man; his bones will not rest in his
native land. For all his power shall be lost in
one great battle, and in defeat he will resort
to begging for his life. He will try once more
to wage fresh war with troops from Macedon.
Condemned as a traitor, he will leave a loyal
wife and dear son behind, abandon Carthage
to flee overseas with only the single vessel,
there to visit the rocky heights of Cilician
Mount Taurus. Oh, how much more easily
a man can bear the heat and cold, hunger,
slavery, exile and the sea, than face death!
After the Italian war he will serve a Syrian
king, Antiochus, and robbed of his hope of
attacking Rome, he shall sail at random and
drift idly to Bithynia, where Prusias rules,
and, too old to fight, shall endure a second
servitude, find a hiding-place by favour of
the king. Finally, when Rome persists in
demanding the surrender of her old enemy,
he will swallow poison and free the world
from lasting fear.' She spoke, and returned

to her dark cave in Erebus, while a joyful
Scipio re-joined his friends at the harbour.

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BOOK XIV:1-32 THE ISLAND OF SICILY

Now, Muses of Helicon, turn, in song, to the sea
of Ortygia, and those cities of the Sicilian shore.
Such is the task within your gift, now to attend
the realm of Roman Italy, now Sicily's harbours,
traverse Macedonian lands, the fields of Greece,
to dip your wandering feet in Sardinian waters,
or behold the reed-huts that Carthage once ruled,
or Spain's western bounds where the sun vanishes.
Such, war waged in diverse lands demands of us.
So up, and follow where battle and trumpets call!
Sicily, Trinacria, the isle of three capes, is a large
fragment of Italy, divided from it and battered by
southerly winds, desolate waves, since the straits
were formed by the thrusts of Neptune's trident.
For the sea, with the hidden force of a hurricane,
dashed itself blindly against the land, tearing its
heart apart and, rushing over the fields in flood,
uprooted cities and peoples, carrying them away.
Since then the swift tide maintains the separation,
as its fierce surge prevents those parted re-joining.
Yet the space between the neighbouring shores
is so slight that they say the barking of dogs and
the cockerels' dawn crowing can be heard over
the water (so narrow are the intervening straits).
The soil has many virtues: in one place the island
grants the plough a rich return, in another the hills
are shady with olive-trees. Its vintages are notable,
it breeds swift horses tolerant of the trumpet blare,
nor does Hybla's nectar yield to the honeycombs
of Hymettus. Here one may admire its medicinal
springs whose sulphurous waters possess hidden
virtues, and the utterances of excellent poets, men
worthy of Apollo and the Muses, who made those
sacred groves re-echo with their song, and Helicon
with the Muse of Syracuse. The people are ready
of tongue, and when they waged war they adorned
their harbours with the spoils of their naval battles.

BOOK XIV:33-78 THE ISLAND'S HISTORY AND FEATURES

The Cyclopes and that King of the Laestrygonians,
cruel Antiphates, were the isle's first rulers; later
the virgin soil was ploughed by the Sicani, a tribe
from the Pyrenees, who named the island after a
river of their native land. Then Siculus led a band
of Ligurians there, conquered it, and once again
changed its name. Then the land was honoured by
Cretan settlers, whom Minos, attempting to punish
Daedalus, had led from his hundred cities, to defeat.
When Minos, slain by the vile treachery of Cocalus'
daughters, went down to perpetual darkness, to sit
in judgement there, his war-weary warriors settled
in Sicily. Then two Trojans, Acestes and Helymus,
introduced Phrygian stock, their followers naming
the cities they built after them, the names enduring.
Then the walls of Zancle (Messina) are not unknown
to fame, since Saturn laid down his sickle there. Yet
Enna's island boasts nothing lovelier than Syracuse,
a city founded from the Isthmus and Sisyphus' city,
outshining others by reason of its Corinthian roots.
Here Arethusa welcomes her dear Alpheus, he bearing
trophies from the sacred games to her fish-rich waters.
But unfriendly Vulcan delights in the Sicilian caverns;
thus Lipari's isle, eaten within by vast flames, vomits
sulphurous fumes from its hollow summits; while Etna
emits the rumbling of inner fires through unstable cliffs,
raging day and night like an angry sea with thunderous
tremors and a muffled roaring. A torrent of flame pours
out, as if from Phlegethon's dark stream, hurling pitch,
with showers of red-hot stones, from its molten depths.
Yet though Etna boils within, in vast whirlpools of fire,
and fresh fires, born unceasingly, flare out, the summit
wondrous to tell, is white; ice and flame co-exist there.
The fiery cliffs are harsh with perpetual frost, the high
summit gripped by winter, and melting snow is hidden
by dark ash. What need to mention the realm of Aeolus,
home of the winds and prison of the storms? Pachino's

promontory stretches southwards like the Peloponnese,
while its rocks echo to the force of the Ionian waves;
to the west Lilybaeum (Marsala), facing Libya and its
fierce westerlies, sees the constellation Scorpius set.
Finally, Pelorus, Sicily's third cape, turns north-east,
extends its ridge to the sea, heaping up shores of sand.

BOOK XIV:79-109 HIERO AND HIERONYMUS

A beneficent ruler, Hiero, had governed the island
peacefully throughout his lifetime, dealing with his
people with calm authority, without exciting fear
of any kind in his subjects. He was not inclined to
violate treaties sworn on oath, and had for many
a year maintained intact an alignment with Rome.
But when time had rendered him weak with age,
the sceptre passed, fatefully, to his young grandson,
and the peaceful realm received this Hieronymus,
a prince unbridled in action. Not yet sixteen, this
youth, once crowned, dizzied by high elevation,
could not support the burden of power, trusting
too much to passing fortune, so that, sanctioning
his crimes with the sword, evils were everywhere,
and justice unknown; shame proving an anathema
to this young monarch. His headstrong passions
were stimulated by his mother Nereis' descent,
she being daughter to King Pyrrhus, and by his
noble line, scion of that Achilles immortalised
in verse, and thus of Peleus. And with sudden
ardour he began to favour Carthage's designs,
perversely, without delay, forging a new treaty,
it being agreed that Hannibal, once Rome was
conquered, would then depart Sicily's shores.
But retribution was nigh, and the Fury denied
him burial in the very soil from which by pact
his ally was to be excluded. Gripped by fear
and anger, a group of conspirators who could
no longer bear his arrogance and barbarities;

the excesses; the thirst for blood, contempt
for decency and vile cruelty; murdered their
young king. Nor did the violence end there:
they went on to slaughter women, with his
innocent sisters being seized and executed.
New-found liberty raged, fully-armed, and
threw off the yoke: some favoured Carthage,
others the Romans, the more familiar allies;
nor was there any lack of wild spirits who
preferred to sign treaties with neither side.

BOOK XIV:110-147 MARCELLUS LANDS IN SICILY (214BC)

Such was the alarm and disturbance which
Hieronymus' death had prompted in Sicily,
when Marcellus, highly honoured (since
he had now been thrice returned as consul)
had brought his fleet to anchor off Messina.
When he had heard all: the tyrant's murder,
the division of opinion, the Carthaginians'
numbers and location, what cities remained
allied to Rome, and how arrogant Syracuse
point blank refused to open her gates to him,
he turned in indignation to warfare, swiftly
visiting on the surrounding countryside, all
the horrors of conflict. So, the north wind,
rushing headlong from Rhodope's heights,
hurls every tenth breaker hardest on shore,
follows the rising mass of water, and rages
on furious wings. Marcellus first laid waste
Lentini's plains, once ruled by Antiphates,
the savage Laestrygonian king. The general
pressed home his campaign, believing that
delay in defeating Greeks was as shameful
as being defeated. He flew about the scene
(it seemed like waging war on a crowd of
women) fertilising Ceres' beloved fields
with blood. The enemy fell all about him,

as the intensity of the fighting prevented
their escape; for whenever a fugitive hoped
to save his life, the general barred his way
with his sword. ‘On,’ he cried; ‘mow and
reap these cowards with your blades!’ as
he drove laggards on with his shield-boss.
‘They stand there all reluctantly, men who
have only learnt to withstand tame bouts
of wrestling in the shade, oiling their limbs
till they glisten: little credit in conquering
them! The only glory you shall win is by
beating the enemy on sight!’ Thus exhorted
by their general, the whole army advanced.
All that was left was a rivalry among them
as to who excelled in seizing the finest spoils.
The Euripus Strait, separating Euboea from
Boeotia, rages no less fiercely, as its current
drives down through that rocky channel to
strike the Caphareus promontory, nor does
the Propontis despatch its sounding waves
more violently from the narrow Hellespont,
nor do Gibraltar’s Straits, whose waters beat
on the Pillars of Hercules where the sun sets,
seethe and rush on with any greater a tumult.

BOOK XIV:148-177 ASILUS AND BERYAS: A GIFT REPAID

Yet a noble act of mercy which was performed
in the heat of that great battle won lasting fame.
A Tuscan soldier, named Asilus, taken captive
earlier at Lake Trasimene, had found a gentle
master and easy conditions under Beryas his
captor, and had returned to his native country
with Beryas’ willing consent. Once free he had
returned to active service and was atoning for
his previous misfortune by fighting in Sicily.
Now in the midst of that fierce conflict, he
encountered Beryas, sent by Carthage to forge

a pact with Syracuse, now warring alongside
them, his face hidden by his bronze helmet.
Asilus attacked with the sword, and threw
him to the ground as he toppled backward.
Yet on hearing Asilus' voice, Beryas, as if
summoning his hesitant and fearful spirit
back from the threshold of the Stygian dark,
tore from his chin the straps that bound his
concealing helm, about to launch a torrent
of words and prayers. Startled now on seeing
a familiar face, Asilus withdrawing his blade,
before Beryas could speak, addressed him
with sighs and tears: 'Do not beg for life,
I pray, in anxious supplication! It is right
for me to save my enemy now. The finest
warrior is he who, first and last, repays
his debt of honour, even in war. You first
granted me escape from death, rescuing
me before I was able to rescue you from
your enemies. If my right arm refused to
clear a path for you through fire and sword,
I would merit all the trouble I have known,
and deserve to meet with greater suffering.'
So saying, he raised Beryas from the ground,
granting life as his own life had been granted.

BOOK XIV:178-191 MARCELLUS LAYS SIEGE TO SYRACUSE (214-212BC)

Having won his first battle on Sicilian soil,
Marcellus calmly advanced and, turning his
victorious standards against Syracuse, laid
siege to its walls, surrounding the city with
his army. But, his desire for battle ebbing,
he hoped by threats to quench the citizens'
blind ardour, and quell their anger. Yet, if
they chose to defy him, and to regard his
forbearance as due to fear, he forbade any
relaxation of the siege; indeed maintained
a closer watch than ever and, with a tranquil

brow, he secretly contrived sudden surprises
for the unwary, just as a white swan, floating
on the surface of Eridanus or by Cayster's
shores, lets the current take its motionless
body, feet paddling beneath the calm flow.

BOOK XIV:192-231 THE SICILIAN ALLIES OF ROME: I

Meanwhile, while opinion wavered in Syracuse,
Marcellus summoned the cities and their peoples
to aid him: Messina, noted for its Oscan founders,
which lies on the coast nearest to Italy; Catania,
too close to Etna, but famous for two dutiful sons
who bore their parents from its eruption long ago;
Camarina, which the oracle warned must never be
re-sited; Hybla whose honey challenges that of
Hymettus for sweetness; Selinus with its palm
groves; and Mylae, once a decent harbour, yet
now a lonely shore offering an insecure refuge
from the sea. Lofty Eryx was loyal, Centuripe
on its hilltop, and Entella, its slopes green with
vines, its name dear to Trojan Acestes; nor was
Thapsus lacking, nor Acrae, on its chilly heights.
Men flocked from Agira, and from Tindari that
reveres the Spartan twins. Hilly Agrigento also
sent a troop of a thousand horse whose neighing
heated the air, rolling a cloud of dust to the sky.
Their leader was Grophus, a fierce bull carved
on his shield in memory of an ancient torment:
when men were roasted over a fire in a brazen
bull, the cries emerged as the bull's bellowing,
so that one might think they were the sounds
of real animals, emitted from their stalls. Not
with impunity was this done; for the inventor
of that fatal engine died, bellowing pitifully,
in the creature he contrived. Now Gela came,
named for its river; Halaesa too, and Palaeca,
its sulphur springs punish perjury with death.

Men of Trojan Segesta were there, and those
from the banks of Acis, which flows down
to the sea through Etna's region, and bathes
the Nereid, beloved Galatea, with its sweet
waters. Acis, once her lover, and a rival to
Polyphemus, was turned by her to a flowing
stream, as he fled from the violent rage of
that wild giant, escaping his enemy, mixing
his flow, triumphantly, with Galatea's flood.
And those who drink of the sonorous rivers
Hypsa and Alabis, and the pellucid waters
of the gleaming Achates (the Dirillo), were
there; those from the winding river Chrysas
(the Dittiano), the meagre Hipparis (Ippari),
the Pantagias, whose slender stream is easy
to cross, and the shores of the fast-flowing
yellow waters of the Symaethus (the Simeto).

BOOK XIV:232-257 THE SICILIAN ALLIES OF ROME: II

Thermae, rich in its possession of Stesichorus,
the ancient poet, sent men from its shore where
the Himera (the Grande) finds the Tyrrhenian Sea.
Another Himera (the Salso), fed from the Nebrodi
range also, hills as rich in shade as any in Sicily,
flows southward, while the former flows north.
Enna on its height sent holy warriors from Ceres'
sacred grove; there a cavern reveals a vast fissure
in the earth, a shadowy threshold, the blind path
to the shades, by which a strange bridal car rose
to a land unknown, when Dis, the Stygian king,
stung by Cupid's arrow, dared to quit mournful
Acheron and seek the world above, driving his
chariot through the void to forbidden daylight.
There he swiftly seized the virgin Proserpine,
the maid of Enna, then wheeled his team, now
stunned, terrified by the sight of sun and sky,
away again to the Styx, so as to hide his bride

in the darkness. Loyal to the Roman alliance
and Rome's generals, were Petraea, Callipolis,
and Engyon with its stony fields; Adrano and
Ergetium too; Melita (Malta), proud of her
woollen yarns; and Caronia, its waters rich in
fish; and Cefalu whose stormy beach shudders
to whales that graze the blue fields of the deep;
and Taormina whose citizens watch Charybdis
snatch ships, swallowing them in her whirlpool
then hurling them from the depths to the stars.
These all favoured Rome and the arms of Italy.

BOOK XIV:258-291 THE SICILIAN ALLIES OF CARTHAGE

The other Sicilian cities adhered to Carthage.
Agathyrna sent a thousand men, and Trogilus,
breathed on by the southerlies, and Phacelina
with its shrine of Taurian Diana. Three times
that number came from Palermo, rich in
prey whether you hunt woodland creatures,
or fish the sea with nets, or prefer to down
wild birds from the sky. Neither Herbeso
nor Naulocha were idle, ignoring the crisis,
nor did Morgentina's leafy plains abstain
from a war fuelled by disloyalty. Mistretta
sent men, and Mineo; little-known Tissa,
and Noto, and Modica, and the Achaetus.
Carthage had help from Trapani, and from
the banks of the noisy Helorus, and from
Caltabellotta, laid waste later in the Second
Servile War. And Carthage was helped by
bold Arbela, hilly Jato, warlike Leonforte,
while Pantelleria's little island fought side
by side with Megara, no larger. There were
also men of Gozo's isle, famed for the sound
of the halcyon's song, when its floating nest
rides the calm sea's smooth surface. Famous
Syracuse herself lined spacious battlements

with her muster, armed in every manner, as the boastful speeches of their leaders roused its people, soon stirred, and fond of tumult, to fiercer rage: never, they said, had any foe set foot within Syracuse' walls, or those of her four fortresses; their ancestors had seen how their city, all impregnable, by virtue of her harbour, defeated the Athenians and eclipsed those laurels won from Xerxes at Salamis; for three hundred triremes were wrecked before their eyes, whilst Athens, which had thwarted the Persians and their archery, sank to naval disaster unavenged. Two brothers, Hippocrates and Epicydes, born in Carthage of a Carthaginian mother though their father was a Sicilian expelled from Syracuse as a criminal, thus inflamed the populace. Raised in North Africa they revealed a mixture, due to their origin, of Sicilian fickleness and Carthaginian guile.

BOOK XIV:292-315 ARCHIMEDES' TOWER

Once Marcellus had realised the defection was irremediable and that the enemy were initiating war, he called the gods of Sicily, the rivers, and lakes, and Arethusa's spring to witness that he was forced by the foe to take up arms, unwillingly, though he had long refused to do so; and attacked the city with a hailstorm of missiles that thundered against its walls. The same ardour gripped his men; they vied swiftly with one another. There was a tower there, constructed with multiple levels, that rose to the sky, built by Archimedes the Greek, ten stories high, requiring many a solid tree-trunk; and from this the besieged threw blazing wood and

stones, filling the air with menacing pitch. One Cimber, a Roman, hurled a fire-brand the weapon lodging, fatally, in the flank of the tower, and flames, fed and strengthened by the wind, extended the growing threat to the inner fabric, ascending the tall structure, in triumph, to the tenth storey, and swiftly consuming the burning timbers, till those all-conquering tongues of fire now licked at the tottering summit, while a vast cloud of smoke poured to the sky. Filled with that black fog, the interior veiled in darkness, not a single man escaped, for, as if struck by a bolt of lightning, the whole structure instantly fell, collapsing in a pile of ashes.

BOOK XIV:316-340 ARCHIMEDES' CLAW

In return though, the Roman ships met with a comparable disaster at sea, since as they neared the city, at a point where the water gently lapped the walls, they encountered an unexpected weapon, cleverly contrived; a rounded spar, its knots planed away, like the mast of a ship, and a grapnel at its tip with iron claws. When this arm was tilted downwards from the wall, it caught those attacking in its metal maw, swinging up to land them in the city. Nor did it only trap men, this war-engine, it even snared whole warships, striking the vessel with the descending force of those unyielding jaws; fixing its iron points in the timber of the closest ship before lifting the craft in the air, when a pitiful sight was seen; the cables of the engine suddenly being released, it lowered its prey with such speed and impetus that the ship and its men were swallowed whole by the sea.

In addition, narrow loopholes had been
skilfully cut in the walls, through which
missiles could be fired unexpectedly, in
safety, the marksmen remaining hidden,
through their task held its dangers since
weapons hurled vengefully by the foe
could enter through the same openings.
Thus Greek ingenuity and Archimedes'
intellect, more powerful than mere force,
kept the threat offered by Marcellus, on
sea and land, at bay, while that mighty
show of arms stalled before the walls.

BOOK XIV:341-380 THE NAVAL BATTLE

Archimedes, then living in Syracuse,
has shed immortal glory on that city,
he whose genius exceeded that of any
man on earth. Lacking in possessions,
the secrets of heaven and earth were
nevertheless revealed to him; he read
the weather, for example the rising
sun portending rain when its rays are
dim and shrouded; he knew whether
the earth is fixed or hovers in space;
why the seething waters of the Ocean
encircle the world, by an unalterable
law; and he understood the moon's
influence on the sea, and those laws
that govern the ebb and flow of tides.
Not without reason did men believe
he had counted the sand-grains this
world holds. They even say he had
moved ships and enabled buildings
of stone to be drawn up a slope, by
deploying women's strength only.
Now, while Archimedes frustrated
the Roman general and his soldiers,

a Carthaginian fleet of one hundred
vessels had sailed to Syracuse' aid,
beaked prows cleaving the blue sea.
The citizens' hopes now running high,
boats sailed from the harbour to join
the fleet. For their part, the Romans
swiftly took to the water, ploughing
the waves, churning the sea with their
oar-blades, until the surface foamed
to their lusty strokes and a pale wake
spread wide over the whitened waters.
Both fleets floated proudly on a sea
echoing to the sound of voices, their
shouts re-echoing from the cliffs. Now
the Roman warships, claiming empty
water, enclosing the space between
their two wings, prepared for battle,
the ships like a circle of huntsmen
shutting in that watery plain. Then
the enemy vessels, also in crescent
formation, sailing on to meet them
closed the circle between their wings.
Immediately, the trumpets blared,
a cruel and fearful braying of brass
echoing far over the sounding deep,
bringing Triton up from the depths,
alarmed by a noise rivalling that of
his twisted conch-shell. The men
scarcely gave a thought to the sea,
straining forward to come to blows,
planting their feet on the gunwales
of their vessels, leaning out to hurl
their missiles. The stretch of water
between the fleets was strewn with
floating weapons while, raised high
by the panting oarsmen's strokes,
the vessels ploughed that foaming
surface into ever-changing furrows.

BOOK XIV:381-407 HIMILCO'S FLAGSHIP

While some of the vessels saw their
oars swept away by the impact of
collision; others, having rammed an
enemy using the beak at their prow,
were themselves trapped by the harm
they had inflicted. In the centre, one
formidable vessel, Himilco's flagship,
towered over the rest: no huger craft
had ever been launched from the naval
yards of Carthage. Four hundred oars
struck the water, and when she caught
the wind with her spread of sail, and
gathered the breeze to her yard-ends,
she moved as slowly as if she were
still propelled by oars alone; while
the vessels that carried the Romans
proved light and agile to manoeuvre,
answering readily to the pilot's hand.
Himilco, the Carthaginian admiral,
finding his starboard side attacked
by the rams of the Roman ships,
offering a prayer to the sea-gods,
laid a feathered arrow, carefully,
to his bow-string and, measuring
the distance to the enemy, directed
the shaft, then relaxed his stance
and watched it fly through the air
to its mark, a Roman pilot seated
at the stern, who found his hand
had been pinned to the helm, such
that it lacked the power to swing
the tiller, and so steer the vessel.
The crew ran to help, as if their
ship were already taken, when,
behold, a second arrow, shot from
the same bow with equal success,
pierced the crew and transfixed

Taurus, who was about to take
command of the masterless helm.

BOOK XIV:408-443 CORBULO FIRES THE VESSEL

A Cumaean ship, Corbulo its captain,
manned by a select crew from Stabiae's
shore, now closed with the flagship;
An image of Venus of the Lucrine
Lake guarded this ship's high stern,
but, veering too near, beneath a hail
of missiles from above, it foundered
in mid-sea, cleaving the waves apart.
The foaming water stifled the sailors'
cries and, as they were dragged into
the depths, their arms broke surface
in vain, though they tried to swim.
Emboldened by anger, Corbulo, in
one great leap sprang across to a
wooden tower alongside, clamped
with iron between two triremes. He
clambered up the tall tower's flights,
and once at the summit brandished
a blazing torch of split pine. From
there, he rained down burning pitch
on the ornaments at the Carthaginian
vessel's stern, to fatal effect, the wind
adding potency to the fiery substance.
The lethal flames spread everywhere,
consuming the deck planks widely.
Seeing the situation, the upper bank
of oars ceased rowing, but, in that
confusion, the news of their danger
had not yet reached the lower banks.
The blaze, spread by further brands
oozing resin, was soon crackling in
the ship's bowels. Yet where those
Roman missiles had not penetrated

as yet, the heat being less, Himilco
defied the foe with a hail of stones,
delaying the fate of his ship. Here,
the unlucky Cydnus, while hurling
a fire-brand was struck by a mighty
stone flung by Lycchaeus. His body,
rolling across benches slippery with
blood, plunged to the water, the brand
hissing as it glowed under the waves,
and the stench filling the air around.
Now Sabratha, in rage, hurled a swift
spear, praying to the god at the stern,
Ammon, Libya's native divinity, who
guarded the vessel, his image, horns
at its brow, gazing out over the sea:
'Help us, O Father, aid us, the afflicted;
O prophet of the Garamantes, grant my
spear may find a mark in some Roman!'
As he spoke, his quivering shaft pierced
the face of Telon, worshipper of Neptune.

BOOK XIV:444-461 HIMILCO ABANDONS SHIP

Those at death's door fought no less fiercely,
gathering, in precipitous flight, into the sole
region of the ship free of the fire; but, with
lightning speed, relentless heat consumed
everything in its path, wreathing the vessel
in triumphant flames. Himilco was the first
to quit the scene at a point where, Vulcan's
infernal conflagration not yet at its height,
he could descend with the help of a rope
to the water, though half-scorched, and be
rowed away by friendly oars. But Bato's
wretched fate deprived the abandoned ship
of her pilot. He had ever shown great skill
in battling wild seas, out-running tempests.
He could anticipate how the north-wind or

south might blow on the morrow; nor did
Ursa Minor, though its circling might be
obscured, escape his vigilance. Seeing no
relief from disaster, he called to his god:
‘Accept this blood-offering, Ammon,
O spectator of our unfortunate defeat.’
And, driving his sword deep in his flesh,
he caught the flow in his right hand, his
blood pouring out over the sacred horns.

BOOK XIV:462-491 CARTHAGINIAN DEATHS

Daphnis, a Sicilian, one of the crew, his
name famed in ancient times, now proved
unlucky in relinquishing his woodland
glades and exchanging his native scene
for the fickle sea. How much greater the
fame his ancestor gained, content to live
the shepherd’s life! For the Sicilian Muses
loved Daphnis, and Apollo favoured him,
gifting him the Castalian pipes, bidding
the streams flow silently, and the joyful
flocks to hasten over field and meadow
to hear him, as he lay in the grass and
sang. When he played on his seven-reed
pipes, and charmed the trees, the Siren
would never, in that moment, float her
accustomed song over the waves; then
Scylla’s dogs fell silent, dark Charybdis
was at rest, and even the Cyclops on his
rocky heights loved to hear the happy
strain. Yet now, Daphnis, who bore so
beloved a name, the flames consumed.
See how Ornytus swims on resiliently
above the burning benches and inflicts
a lingering watery death upon himself,
as once Ajax the lesser, son of Oileus,
struck by Athene’s lightning, died in

the waves, his body burnt and scorched.
Here, Sciron, a Marmarid, lifted by the
sea, was pierced by a ship's sharp prow;
part of his body was above, part below
surface, and rigid in death was dragged
through the waves, pitiful sight, by that
metal beak. Both fleets now raised their
speed, and the oarsmen's faces, as they
drove onwards, were spattered with a
bloody dew from their splashing oars.
The Roman admiral's flagship itself
was propelled by six banks of blades,
and those sturdy rowers drove it faster
than the wind, such that when Lilaeus
caught hold to slow the craft, his hands,
severed at the wrist by a merciless axe,
still clung to the side as the ship flew on.

BOOK XIV:492-515 THE DEATH OF PODAETUS

A native of the Aeolian Isles, Podaetus
was born aboard a Sicilian boat. He had
not yet reached manhood and was as yet
unready for glorious deeds, but driven by
burning courage or an ill-starred destiny,
the lad loved to cut the waves in his tall
ship, the Chimaera, while his snowy arm
wielded a painted shield. On he sailed,
rejoicing, outstripping Carthaginian and
Roman ships alike, with his finer oarsmen
and better archers; and had already sunk
the turreted vessel, Nessus; but the lad
was tempted to ruin by his first taste of
glory! While he prayed wildly to heaven
that he might strip Marcellus of his proud
helmet crest and armour, a deadly wound
from a spear was the sole, violent, response.
Alas, for that loss! For whether he hurled

the shining discus through the air, or sent
a javelin among the clouds, or skimmed
the race-track with flying feet, or with a
single mighty leap covered the stretch of
measured ground, his efforts became him.
Was there not glory enough, not praise
enough to win in bloodless competition;
why seek greater deeds, lad, to perform?
When he fell, when that fatal spear sank
him in the waves, cheating his sea-tossed
bones of a grave in Syracuse, the straits
and cliffs of the Cyclopes, and Cyane
the nymph and her river-god Anapus,
with Ortygian Arethusa, wept for him.

BOOK XIV:516-538 THE PERSEUS FIGHTS THE IO

Elsewhere, the warship Perseus, captained
by Tiberinus, fought the Io, commanded by
Crantor a Carthaginian, the vessels clawing
together with their grappling hooks in battle,
the men fighting not with arrows as on land,
or javelins hurled from a distance, but with
the sword at close quarters. The Romans
boarded their enemy, over the dead killed
by the first encounter, but then Polyphemus
roused his mates to set loose the grappling
irons and weighty chains, intending, once
the Io was freed, to separate the boarders
from their vessel, with a stretch of empty
water. Polyphemus had been reared in a
cave on Etna, and delighted in his name
recalling the savagery of earlier times;
a she-wolf suckled him in infancy; he was
of mighty frame, of awesome size, cruel
minded with an ever-angry visage, while
a lust for blood, worthy of the Cyclopes,
filled his heart. He loosed the chains and

freed the ship by main force, dipped the oars in the sea, and would have driven the vessel on, had not a spear, hurled by Laronius, pinned him to the thwarts as he plied the oar with all his might. Yet death itself failed to arrest his actions once begun, since his failing arms still performed all their customary motion, scraping the oar over the water in vain.

BOOK XIV:539-561 HIMILCO FLEES

The defeated Carthaginians were wedged in those corners of the Io free of the enemy but, the ship tilting with the sudden weight, sea rushed in, and she sank beneath the wave. Shields, helmets, images of guardian gods, and shattered javelins floated on the water. One man, his sword lost, employed a piece of broken wood for weapon, arming himself with a fragment of the wreck; a second with misguided energy hurried to rob the vessel of its oars, while others tore at the benches, hurling them towards the enemy. Neither prow nor helm were spared, but split apart to act as weapons, while floating javelins were caught up and re-used. Water found its way into gaping wounds, only to be expelled, freed to the sea by the victims with sobbing breath. Lacking weapons, men grappled their enemies tightly so as to drown them, giving their own lives to kill the foe. Those who re-emerged from the water grew ever-more savage, ready to use the very sea itself as their weapon; A bloody vortex swallowed the tangled bodies. Here a clamour, there groans and death, or flight, a snapping of oars and

the noise of clashing prows. The waters
seethed with the storm of war; and now
Himilco, worn down by renewed attacks,
turned tail, and stole away in a little boat
making swiftly for the coast of Africa.

BOOK XIV:562-579 THE FATE OF VARIOUS SHIPS

At last, the Corsicans and the Carthaginians
conceded defeat; those ships captured intact
were towed to shore in long procession, while
the rest, still alight, stood out to sea. Flames
gleamed over the shining deep, as the rippling
surface quivered with reflections. The Cyane
burned, a vessel well known to those waters,
and the winged Siren. The Europa also burned,
named for her who rode Jove's back, grasping
a horn, carried through the sea which he swam
disguised as a snow-white bull; and the watery
Nereid too, named for those sea-nymphs with
floating hair who, with dripping reins, guide
curve-backed dolphins over the deep; and then
there was the Python, ubiquitous on the seas,
the horned Ammon, and the Dido, propelled
by six banks of oars, that carried an image of
the Tyrian queen. But the Anapus was towed
to her native shore; with the Pegasus, named
for the winged horse once born of the Gorgon;
the Libya, bearing a signification of that land;
the Triton; the Etna, named for the pyre, above
high cliffs, beneath which Enceladus breathes;
and the Sidon, named for that city of Cadmus.

BOOK XIV:580-617 THE PLAGUE

Now, Marcellus, may well have been able,
to penetrate the walls of a Syracuse whose
citizens were terrified, and to lead his eagles,
with scant delay, against their temple-gods,
had the air not been suddenly infected with
vile pestilence, a fatal plague, due to divine
ill-will and the sea's pollution by the dead,
that robbed the poor Romans of their triumph.
The golden-haired sun, with its fervent heat,
filled Cyane's waters and those wide-spread
marshes with the Stygian stench of Cocytus;
it marred the fruits, the kind gifts of autumn,
scorching them with quick lightning-flame.
The dull air fumed with dark vapours; the soil
was dry, dusty, its surface spoiled by the heat,
providing no sustenance, no shade for the sick,
while a gloomy mist filled the pitch-dark sky.
The dogs were the first to feel its effects, then
the birds dropped from the black clouds, their
wings flagging; next the woodland creatures
were laid low. Now, the deadly plague spread
further, killing soldiers, depopulating the camp.
It parched their tongues; a cold sweat flowed
over their bodies, poured from their shivering
frames; their dry throats refusing a passage to
the food given. Their lungs were racked with
coughing, and the thirsting victims' breaths
emerged heated and fiery from their mouths.
Alas their sunken eyes could scarcely endure
the light; the nostrils collapsed, they vomited
blood and matter, their wasted bodies mere
skin and bone. Alas for the warrior, famous
in battle, carried off by so ignoble a death!
Proud trophies, won in many a fight, were
hurled on the funeral pyre. Medicine itself
yielded to disease. The dead were piled high,

their ashes formed a vast heap, yet all round
lay unattended and unburied bodies, as all
feared to touch an infectious corpse. That
fatal plague, nourished by what it fed on,
spread further until the walls of Syracuse
themselves shook with cries of grief, while
the Carthaginians experienced a suffering
as great as that of the Romans. Heaven's
wrath fell on both with equal force, a like
image of death proved present everywhere.

BOOK XIV:618-640 MARCELLUS RENEWS THE ATTACK

Yet, as long as Marcellus lived, the cruel
weight of misfortune could never break
the Romans' spirit, and the survival of
that one life, despite a mound of corpses,
compensated for their sufferings. Thus, as
soon as the plague-inducing heat of Sirius,
the fierce Dog-star, had cooled, and there
was less incidence of infection, Marcellus,
(just as a fisherman will wait for the wind
to slacken, and a calm sea, before rowing
his boat out into the deep) armed soldiers
snatched from the grasp of disease, while
purifying their ranks with due sacrifice.
They gathered eagerly to the standards,
and drew a joyful breath, on once again
hearing the sound of trumpets. Marching
to the attack, they were glad of the chance
to die in battle, if fate so ordained it and
battle was not refused, pitying their friends
who had died like sheep, finding a sad end
drawing a last breath on dark barrack-beds.
Looking back at the grave-mounds of their
inglorious dead, they felt it better to remain
unburied on the battlefield than be consumed
by disease. Marcellus led, hastening the proud

standards toward the walls. His men hid faces
emaciated by sickness behind their helmets,
concealing their pallid hue, so that the enemy
gained no succour from it. Swiftly that host
passed over the shattered walls, and ran on
in close order; all those impregnable forts
and defences being taken in the one assault.

BOOK XIV:641-675 THE CITY OF SYRACUSE

No city on earth, on which the sunlight falls,
could then rival Syracuse. So many temples
of the gods, so many strong-walled harbours,
market-squares, theatres on tall pillars, piers
that confronted the waves, with a countless
succession of great houses, as spacious as
country mansions. Then there were spaces
dedicated to athletic contests, enclosed by
long lines of colonnades running to the far
distance. What a plethora of tall buildings
adorned with the prows of captured ships,
what a wealth of arms on the temple walls,
spoils of the Athenian foe, or brought back
from conquered Libya abroad! Here was
the site adorned with Agathocles' trophies,
there Hiero's riches amassed in peacetime;
and there again the work of famous artists
consecrated by the ancients. Nowhere in
those days was the painter's artistry finer;
Syracuse needed no Corinthian bronzes;
her tapestry was awash with shining gold,
and displayed living human likenesses
in the weave, to rival things wrought on
Babylonian looms, or by a Tyre priding
herself on her purple-dyed embroideries;
work that might equal patterns created
by the needle on Attalus' tapestries, or
those of Egypt. Then there were goblets

of gleaming silver, beautified by gems, and by forms of the gods whose divinity was portrayed by genius; pearls from the Red Sea; and silk, its threads those women comb from cocoons that hang from tree-branches. Such was the city, and the riches of which Marcellus was now the master, as he stood on a lofty height gazing down at the place where the blare of the trumpets would inspire terror. At his nod, the walls would be left standing or, by tomorrow's light, demolished utterly. He sighed at his boundless power, shrinking from such licence, swiftly restraining the soldiers' violence, ordering the houses to be left intact, sparing the temples of the gods for them to be worshipped in as of old. So mercy to the defeated replaced acts of plunder, while Victory, content with no more than herself – the victory won, wafted her wings, unstained by blood.

BOOK XIV:676-688 ARCHIMEDES' DEATH: MARCELLUS SPARES THE CITY

And Archimedes, memorable defender of your native city, you also drew tears from the conqueror; your own sad death occurred as you pored calmly over some diagram traced in the sand. Yet the rest of the people, delighted to survive, vied in joy, despite their defeat, with the victors. Marcellus himself, emulating the mercy shown by gods, in saving the city proved its second founder. Hence it yet remains, to stand throughout all the ages, a true witness to the character of generals past. Happy the nations, if peace would spare

our cities from plunder now, as war was
once accustomed to do! As it is, if that
prince, our emperor, Domitian, who has
brought world peace, had not checked
our unbridled passion for despoiling all
and sundry, the land and sea would have
been stripped bare by robbery and greed.

End of Book XIV of the Punica

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BOOK XV:1-31 THE ROMAN SENATE SEEKS A COMMANDER FOR SPAIN

But the Roman Senate was now troubled by fresh anxiety. Who was to promote the war in Spain and command those of its tribes discouraged by events? Both the elder Scipios, those two brothers who had fought with martial spirit, had fallen to their proud enemy. Hence the dread that Spain, the country of Tartessus, would now yield to Carthaginian rule, fearing to suffer an enemy so close to their shores. Anxious and sorrowful, the Senate looked for a remedy to aid a state shaken by defeat, praying to the gods for a general brave enough to handle a wounded army. Young Scipio longed to appease the shades of his father and uncle, but all his kin, hurt by their grievous loss, mindful of his youth, tried to dissuade him. In going to that ill-omened land, he must fight an enemy, on the soil where his loved ones fell, which had thwarted both their strategies, had beaten both their armies, and was now flush with victory. Nor was it easy for tender shoulders to bear the weight of so great a war, or for an un-bearded youth to take on high command. Their advice troubled the young man's mind as he sat in the green shade of a laurel that grew behind his house, when suddenly two figures, exceeding mortal stature, descended from the sky, to left and right. Here Virtue stood, there, Pleasure, her foe. Persian scents breathed from Pleasure's locks, her ambrosial tresses flowing free; her robe of Tyrian purple embroidered with glittering gold; her hair pinned to grant a studied beauty to her brow; her wanton, wandering eyes darting flame. Virtue's looks were altogether different: her hair sought no borrowed charm, growing freely not ordered above her brow; her gaze was steady; calm in face and aspect, she showed a pleasant modesty, while a snow-white robe enhanced her tall stature.

BOOK XV:32-67 THE IMAGE OF PLEASURE ADDRESSES SCIPIO

Now Pleasure, confident of her promise, spoke first:
Why this unbecoming foolishness, my boy, wasting
the flower of your youth in fighting? Surely you recall
Cannae, the River Po, and Trasimene, that Lydian lake
more dreadful than the Stygian marsh? How long will
you defy fate on the battlefield? Now would you aim
at Spain, the realm of Atlas, and the walls of Carthage
herself? I advise that you desist from seeking danger,
risking your life in the heat of battle. Unless you shun
her worship, Virtue will have you racing, wildly, into
the ranks of death, the heart of every fire. She it was
who sent your father and your uncle down to the dark
waters of Erebus, and threw away the life of Paullus,
as in days gone by she wasted the lives of the Decii.
She it is who holds out to the shade, no longer aware
of his deeds on earth, the emptiness of some glorious
epitaph, to adorn the tomb that holds his ashes. Yet,
follow me, my boy, and the term of life granted you
will be free from hardship, nor will the war-trumpet
trouble your anxious sleep; nor will you feel the Arctic
blast, nor the fierce heat of Cancer, nor snatch a bite
to eat, on a blood-stained field; the pangs of thirst
will be absent, the helm filled with dust, all the host
of fearful tasks. For you will spend happy days and
unclouded hours, and a life of ease will grant you
the expectation of a ripe old age. How many things
the gods themselves have created for our enjoyment!
How many delights they offer with generous hand!
Do the gods not set an example of peaceful existence
to mortals; imperturbably calm, their minds at rest?
I am she who wedded Venus to Anchises, by Simois'
waters, and Aeneas, your founder, was born of them.
I am she who often altered Jove's form; now a bird,
now a bull with menacing horns. Listen then, to me.
Mortal years rush by, no man lives twice; passes
the hour, the torrent of death snatches you away,
you can bear naught that pleased you to the shades.

What man, as the last of the light is fading from his eyes, does not sigh, too late, for the days of Pleasure?'

BOOK XV:68-120 VIRTUE SPEAKS

When she had fallen silent, for her speech was done, Virtue spoke: 'How can you tempt a lad, in the flower of his age, to a life of shadowy illusions, he to whom the gods have granted the gift of reason and the divine seeds of mighty intellect? As mortal creatures are to the gods above, so are all the other creatures to man; for Nature herself assigned such lesser gods to earth. Yet a fixed law condemns degenerate spirits to dwell in dark Avernus, while the gates of the heavens stand open to those nourishing the divine seed within them. Need I mention Hercules, Amphitryon's son, he who slew monsters; or Bacchus who bore his banners from the East in triumph, after conquering the Indians and Chinese, his chariot drawn through cities by Caucasian tigers; or the Twins whom Leda bore, to whom sailors turn in times of danger; or Romulus Quirinus, Rome's hero? Do you not see how a god raised the human face towards the heavens, giving mortals an upward gaze, yet made the flocks and herds, the various species of birds and wild beasts, to go on their bellies, sluggish of mind and crude of nature? For the human species is born for glory, and man is happy in seeking glory if he accepts the gifts of heaven. So, listen a moment to me, while I give a brief example: Rome was once no match for Fidenae and the nearby Etruscan threat, content to grow its population by granting of asylum; yet see how high she has climbed by her own valour. And see how a host of cities that once flourished were ruined by excess. For neither the gods' wrath nor an enemy's spears are as fatal as when Pleasure infects the mind. Her attendants are foul Drunkenness and Debauchery, Scandal hovers about her on dark wings. Mine are Honour, Praise, and Fame, Glory with her

smiling face, and Victory raising snow-white wings
like mine, while Triumph, laurel-crowned, lifts me to
the stars. My house is pure and stands on a lofty hill;
a steep track leads there by a rocky ascent, so hard
is the effort you must undergo; it is never my custom
to deceive, and you must truly exert yourself to enter,
and not consider good what fickle Fortune can give
and also take away. Soon you will gain the heights
and gaze down on humankind below. You will ever
encounter the opposite of Pleasure's blandishments.
On a bed of straw, beneath the stars, you will suffer
sleepless nights, mastering cold and hunger. You
shall worship justice in all you do, the gods will
stand witness and judge your actions. And then,
whenever your country, and dire event, demands,
you must be first to arm, first to enter the breach
in the enemy wall, and neither steel nor gold must
command your thoughts. I will give you no robes
dyed with Tyrian purple, no fragrant perfumes that
demean a man, but the gift of overcoming by force
that savage foe that harasses the armies of Rome
and, after the Carthaginian defeat, of placing your
proud laurels there, in the lap of Capitoline Jove.'

BOOK XV:121-148 SCIPIO'S CHOICE, AND AN OMEN

Prophesying thus, from the shrine of her heart, Virtue
won Scipio to her side, who pleased by her examples
showed his approval. But Pleasure, indignant, could
not refrain from speaking: 'I will not detain you long,'
she cried, 'but know that a time will come, my time,
when the Romans will vie to absorb my doctrine and
follow my commands, and I alone will be honoured.'
Then, shaking her head, she rose to the dark clouds.
Now, full of Virtue's counsel, Scipio dreamed great
things, fired with desire for the task ahead. Where so
many shrank from war, he ascended the tall Rostrum,
claiming the weighty burden of an uncertain conflict.

All hearts were stirred: some thought his father's gaze
others his uncle's stern features were revived in him.
But, though excited, the silent fear of disaster filled
doubting minds anxiously assessing the vast burden
of the war, even friends uneasy at his slender years.
As the crowd reflected murmuring confusedly, see,
a serpent, its glittering scales spotted with gold, was
seen to glide over the sky, among the clouds, leaving
a fiery track through the air, heading for that region
of echoing shores where Atlas upholds the firmament.
Jove three times confirmed the omen with lightning,
and with sudden far-flung thunder shook the heavens.
Then men fell to their knees, hailing the portent, and
urged Scipio to arm, to go where the gods clearly led,
the path marked out for him by his father Jove's sign.

BOOK XV:149-179 SCIPIO WITH HIS FLEET REACHES TARRAGONA

Men vied to join him, as comrades in arms and to help
in the campaign, begging to share in the arduous effort,
to serve alongside him bringing glory enough. Soon,
a new fleet was launched on the blue sea. All Italy was
with him as he crossed to Spain. Thus a north-westerly,
waging wild battle with the deep, hurls arching waves
against the Isthmus, and, rushing in a foaming flood
through the moaning rocks, mingles the Ionian waters
with the Aegean. Now Scipio leapt up to stand on his
ship's stern, and fully-armed prayed, thus: 'Neptune,
the divine Lord of the Trident, whose depths we seek
to cross, grant the fleet passage if my cause is right,
and deign to assist our efforts. I carry just war over
the sea.' A light breeze blew, and drove the sails on
with following breath. The nimble vessels slipped
past Italy's shores, where Tyrrhenian waters sound,
then their prows sped along the Ligurian coastline.
Now from the open sea they saw the soaring Alps
far off, there where earth invades the sky. Next was
the city of Marseilles, that Greek foundation, where

those colonists from Phocaea, encircled by warlike tribes, appalled by the barbarous rites of their savage neighbours, still retain, among those foreign peoples, the manners, dress, and customs of their native land. The general then set a course along the curving shore till high wooded hills appeared, the Pyrenean forest lost in the clouds; next ancient Emporiae settled by the Greeks, then Tarragona, host to the vine, where they found safe anchor, the ships secure behind its harbour wall, the toil and dangers of the sea forgot.

BOOK XV:180-213 SCIPIO'S FATHER APPEARS TO HIM IN A DREAM

The dead of night brought Scipio profound slumber: he dreamed his father's ghost stood before him, and with troubled gaze warned him thus: 'My son, once your father's saviour, a son who now brings honour to my grave, you must lay waste this land, a source of deadly war, taming three Libyan generals, proud of their vile slaughter, who split their army between them. If you were to seek battle while they chose to concentrate their forces, not even you could survive a triple attack? Forgo that dangerous course, but be not slow to adopt a better. There is a city, founded by Teucer long ago, now New Carthage, and held by Punic colonists. Like Libya's Carthage, this is their great capital in Spain. No other can rival its treasures, its lofty site and harbour, its wealth of fertile land, nor its skill and industry in forging weapons of war. Move against it, my son, while those generals backs are turned. No field of battle could bring you equal glory, or such rich spoils.' Thus his father advised, drawing closer to warn him, when Scipio awoke and the vision faded. He rose, then prayed to those gods who inhabit the underworld, calling to his kinsmen's shades in supplication: 'Be you my generals in war, lead on to the city named; I will avenge you, and, with

the Spanish forces routed, will attend your graves
dressed in Tyrian purple, and offer sacrifice there,
and honour your tombs with games and contests.'
Riding ahead, he quickened the pace, leading his
army swiftly, scouring the plains, as in the games
at Elis, when the champion steed springs from his
starting gate, outpacing his rivals and, marvellous
to relate, drawing on the team, so that no eye can
follow that chariot in its flight as it carves the air.

BOOK XV:214-250 THE CAPTURE OF CARTAGENA (NEW CARTHAGE)

Now, sunrise, on the seventh day of their march,
gradually revealed the citadel of New Carthage,
its towers rising higher the closer they came.
And, at the hour Scipio had appointed, Laelius
arrived with the fleet, blockading the city on
the seaward side, with a line of ships. Cartagena
was well-favoured by nature, its high walls are
surrounded by the waves, while to the eastward
a little island protects the bay's narrow entrance.
But where the sun sets there is a barren extent
of standing water, exposed or hidden by the ebb
and flow of the tide. The city stands in front of
this lagoon facing the chilly north; and stands
high on the heights that stretch to the waters
below, its walls defended by that eternal sea.
The Romans hastened to scale the slopes as
boldly as if they were bearing their standards
in victory across level ground. The leader in
the city's defence was Aris, who under attack,
trusting to the lofty site and employing all his
skill, fortified the citadel further, as the nature
of the ground dictated. With only a little effort,
the Romans were dislodged from their footing,
rolling down the slopes their limbs damaged,
many breathing their last. But when the tide
turned and the waters of the lagoon flowed

swiftly back to sea, it was possible to cross
those places, where the tall ships had lately
ploughed their furrows, in safety, and Scipio,
advancing from this undefended direction,
now silently approached the walls, the crews
wading in quickly from the boats, attacking
the city from the seaward side, which Aris
relying on the difficulties had disregarded.
Flat on the ground, with the Carthaginians
defeated, the wretched man yielded his neck
to the fetters, and surrendered the disarmed
inhabitants to servitude. Thus the Sun who
at his rising had seen the city besieged by an
army, saw it captured before he plunged his
chariot and team beneath the western waters.

BOOK XV:251-285 THE ROMANS CELEBRATE THEIR VICTORY

Dawn came driving shadows from the earth;
first, altars were raised: a great bull was slain,
an offering to Neptune, and another to Jupiter.
Then true merit gained its reward, and valour
obtained the prize earned by its wounds: here,
medals gleamed on a man's chest, or a torque
of gold encircled a neck; while there a warrior
shone with the high honour of a mural crown.
Laelius, above all, famous for his deeds and
descent, won thirty cattle, a noble decoration
for his naval victory, and the weapons taken
from the Punic general. Then martial banners
and spears were awarded on merit, and some
portion of the spoils granted with each award.
After honour had been paid to men and gods,
the captured wealth was assessed and allotted:
this gold for the Senate, those talents for war,
gifts for allied kings, above all for the temples
of the gods; the remainder to the soldiers who
had fought so well. Then Scipio summoned

the chief of a Spanish tribe, who was pledged
to a pretty girl whom he passionately loved;
Scipio, happy in his triumph, led her back,
her virginity unspoiled, to her joyful spouse.
Then, with their cares at rest, they set tables
on the nearby shore, feasted and made merry.
Laelius spoke: 'Bless your pure heart, noble
general, bless the spirit in you. The glories,
the praise of mighty heroes, all their virtues
celebrated in song, must yield place to you.
Agamemnon of Mycenae, he who launched
a thousand ships, and Achilles who brought
his Thessalians to the war, were led by love
of woman to violate the pledge of alliance,
and every tent pitched on Trojan soil was
filled with slave-girls; to you the honour
of a foreign virgin is more sacred than was
Cassandra's honour to the Greeks.' So they
conversed together, until Night, her form
veiled in darkness, drove her black steeds
through the sky, persuading all to slumber.

BOOK XV:286-319 PHILIP V OF MACEDON ATTACKS AETOLIA

Meanwhile Aetolia was involved in a fierce
confrontation with Philp V of Macedon, his
fleet having suddenly attacked, while their
neighbours the Acarnanians joined forces
with the enemy. This new front resulted
from the alliance between Carthage and
Philip, against Rome. He was of a famous
royal line, proud to wield the sceptre of
the Aeacids, and of his ancestor Achilles.
He terrified Oricon, in Epirus, attacking
at night, making an armed assault on
un-walled villages of the Illyrian shore
where the people of Taulas lived, then
put to sea and fell upon the Phaecian

and Thresprotian lands, rushing through
Epirus in a vain and pointless campaign.
Next he showed his banners on the coast
of Anactorium, swiftly occupied the Gulf
of Ambracia, and the shoreline of Olpae.
His oars stirred the waters of Lefkada to
fury, passing Apollo's temple at Actium.
Nor did he leave the harbours of Ithaca,
where Laertes once reigned, unvisited,
beneath Neriton's stony slopes; Same;
and Cephalonia's white breakers and
sounding cliffs. He even took delight
in visiting Pelops' shores and the cities
of Achaia, approaching the citadel of
Oeneus, who suffered Diana's vengeance,
a place where the Curetes once dwelt,
promising the Greeks there he would
fight for them against Rome. Next he
swept past Corinth, Patras, Pleuron's
royal city, and twin-peaked Parnassus
whose cliffs echo with Apollo's voice.
Often too, he was recalled to his own
country by war, when his kingdom was
attacked by the Sarmatian Orestae, or
an army of Dolopes invaded his lands.
Yet he was loth to desist from his idle
campaigns, with this pretence of war
around the coasts of Greece; though,
in the end, defeated now at sea then
on land, no longer hoping for aid from
Carthage, he begged for alliance with
Rome, accepting a curb on his powers.

BOOK XV:320-342 FABIUS TAKES TARENTUM (TARANTO)

Now the fortunes of Tarentum, of Spartan
foundation, increased Rome's power and
glory, for that disloyal city was conquered

finally by old Fabius, the last deed of that cautious commander. Here too, his cunning won bloodless victory, the city being taken without risk. For learning that the leader of the Punic garrison was passionately in love, Fabius, a brave man but one keen on peace and quiet, devised a ruse. The brother of the woman involved (he being present in the Roman camp) was compelled to go to his sister, and promise her a rich reward guaranteed to win a woman's compliance, if the Punic commander could be persuaded to open the gates and let the Romans enter. The Carthaginian gave way, and Fabius achieved his wish, his army surrounding the walls, and entering the unguarded city by night. Yet when the news then arrived that Marcellus had met his death fighting in battle, it seemed as though the Sun had changed course, turning back his chariot, and deserting Rome. That giant of a man had been laid low; that heart where Mars, the fierce war-god dwelt, that heart never daunted by danger, now was cold. Alas, how great the ruin that brought Hannibal glory! The terror of Carthage lay dead on the field, yet if some god had let him live a little longer, he might have robbed Scipio of his distinction of ending the Second War.

BOOK XV:343-398 THE DEATH OF MARCELLUS

Apulia was the field of conflict, and there a hill rose between the twin camps of the Roman force, the burden of command being shared by Crispinus and Marcellus, the two consuls waging war as one. Marcellus said: 'I would have us search the woods nearby and station men on the slopes between us,

lest Hannibal tries to occupy the hills before we do. If you agree, Crispinus, I would like us both to act, since nothing is lost by combining our experience.' Once settled, all were quick to mount their fiery horses. Marcellus saw his son donning his armour, enjoying the excitement, and cried: 'Your ardour wondrously exceeds your father's. May you meet with quick success! I was proud of you in Syracuse, when you watched the battle with a gaze like mine, although too young to fight! Come, my noble lad, stay by your father's side, let me teach the one new to war the art of battle.' Then he embraced his son, with a brief prayer: 'O mightiest of the gods, grant that I may offer you the greatest spoils, seized from the Punic general, and borne on my lad's shoulders!' But, at that, Jupiter sent a shower of blood from out the clear sky, the dark and inauspicious drops falling on their armour, and he had barely ceased to speak, they had barely entered that fatal valley, when a swift troop of Numidians attacked them with their javelins, storming down on them, a mass of the enemy rising at them from ambush. When the brave Roman, now surrounded, saw he had paid his last dues to the gods, he sought to take to the underworld the glory of his noble death. Now he rose in the saddle to hurl his spear, now fought with the sword at close quarters, and he might have survived that sudden onset in the narrow pass, had not a missile struck his son. For the father's hand shook with grief, his ill-fated shield, loosened, fell now from his nerveless grasp. Then a lance pierced his undefended body, and he fell with his face in the dust. When Hannibal, amid the fury of battle, saw the weapon transfix Marcellus' breast, he gave a mighty shout: 'Carthage, you need fear Rome's power no more! That dread name, that pillar of the Roman state lies low. But one who was my peer in war must not descend without honours to the shade. Heroic hearts find no place for envy.' Soon a funeral pyre was raised, of mighty timbers

dragged from the forest, such that one might think Hannibal himself had fallen. Incense and offerings of meat, and the consul's rods and shield were now carried in procession, and Hannibal lit the flames, saying: 'We have won immortal glory, in robbing Rome of Marcellus. Italy may now lay down her arms. March in the funeral train of a proud spirit, my men, grant his ashes the last tribute; for never would I deny Rome that.' Crispinus fared no better in battle, his horse bore him to camp a dying man.

BOOK XV:399-432 SCIPIO AND HASDRUBAL BARCA IN SPAIN

Such were the events in Italy. But in the conflict in Spain, the results were different. The Carthaginian defeat had, by its speed, terrified the tribes allied to them. The generals only hope was to unite all their forces, but they saw young Scipio had begun his campaign under bright auspices, as if he wielded his father's lightning-bolts in battle, taking, within a single day and night, a city secure in its position on a high hill with steep approaches, filling it with piles of dead, while Hannibal, that mighty general, had spent a year fighting in that land before he had conquered Saguntum, so inferior in numbers and in wealth to Carthage. Nearby, his camp pitched close to the wooded cliffs, was Hasdrubal, inspired by his brother's mighty deeds. Here lay a mixed force of Cantabrians and rebel Africans, here too Asturians, swifter even than the agile Moors; with Hasdrubal revered as much in Spain as Hannibal was feared in Italy. It happened to be the anniversary of an old and solemn Punic festival, the day on which those first foundations of mighty Carthage had been laid, native huts forming the beginnings of that new city. Now, Hasdrubal, recalling his city's early history, was enjoying the festival, his standards wreathed with flowers, seeking the gods' favour. A splendid cape, his brother's gift, draped his shoulders. Worn

by Sicilian tyrants, Hieronymus of Syracuse had
gifted it to Hannibal amongst other presents, as a
pledge of close alliance. Two scenes were depicted
there: an eagle, wings outspread, bore Ganymede
through the clouds to the heavens, while beside
it that great cavern was embroidered, in purple,
home to the Cyclopes, where Polyphemus lay,
tearing with his fatal jaws at bleeding corpses,
around him the splintered bones that fell from
his mouth. He was shown extending his hand,
and demanding a cup of wine from Ulysses,
while vomiting a mixture of wine and blood.

BOOK XV:433-470 SCIPIO ATTACKS HASDRUBAL'S CAMP

Hasdrubal, standing before the turf altars, prayed
for the gods' favour, while every eye rested on
this mantle, a triumph of Sicilian embroidery.
But a messenger on horseback brought startling
news, that a hostile force approached. Worship
of the gods was suspended, in confusion, with
the rites and altars abandoned. The Carthaginians
sought the protection of their camp, and when
dew-wet Dawn faintly lit the sky they hastened
into battle. Bold Sapura was struck by Scipio's
sounding spear, and both armies took it for an
omen. Scipio shouted: 'Blessed spirits, your
first victim bites the dust. On, soldiers, fight
and kill, as you did when your dead generals
were alive!' And as he spoke, they rushed in.
Laenas slew Myconus, Latinus slew Cirta, as
Maro killed Thysdrus and Catalina Nealces,
who incestuously loved his own sister. Then
Kartalo, ruler of the Libyan sands, was met
and overcome by fierce Nasidius. Spain now
trembled, as Laelius raged amongst the ranks
with a fury beyond belief. He was the pride
and glory of Rome, a man to whom Nature

granted every gift, and the gods denied none.
When he spoke in the market-place, his words
fell as sweetly from his lips as the honeyed
speeches of Nestor, king of Pylos, long ago.
Whenever the Senate, undecided, had asked
a speaker to address them, Laelius moved
their hearts as if by a magic spell. Yet when
the braying of the trumpet deafened men's
ears in battle, this same Laelius showed
such ardour, he seemed to have been born
to fight: no action in life but he sought to
win honour. Now he downed Gala, a man
who owed his existence to a ruse, for his
mother had rescued him from the flames
of Carthaginian sacrifice, by substituting
another's child, but no joy lasts that is got
by deceiving the gods. Next Laelius sent
Alabis, Murrus and Draces to the shades;
the last of these shrieking like a woman
as he died, the sword severing the head
from the neck, in the midst of his pleas,
while his lips still mouthed after death.

BOOK XV:471-492 HASDRUBAL FLEES TO ITALY

But Hasdrubal showed no desire to fight.
He found concealment among the wooded
hills and pathless cliffs, unmoved by his
terrible loss, and the slaughter of his men.
He fled towards the Alps and Italy, a rich
reward for flight. The word was passed to
his forces silently: to cease the fight and
disperse among the trees and hills, with
whoever escaped to seek the heights of
the Pyrenees. He led the retreat, doffing
his splendid armour, and hidden behind
a Spanish shield, he fled to the mountains,
deliberately leaving his troops in extreme

disorder. The Romans, meanwhile, bore
their standards, in victory, to his deserted
camp. No captured city could have held
more plunder, and this, as Hasdrubal had
anticipated delayed the work of slaughter:
thus a beaver, taken from the river's flow,
will bite off the body parts that led to his
being chased, and swim away, while his
hunters are occupied with their reward.
Now, with the Carthaginians concealed
among the trees, trusting to the wooded
heights, Scipio turned about in search of
wider conflict, and an enemy more likely
to face defeat. While, in the pass that led to
the Pyrenees, they fixed a trophy with this
inscription: This shield of Hasdrubal's is
offered by Scipio, his conqueror, to Mars.'

BOOK XV:493-521 HASDRUBAL CROSSES THE ALPS

Meanwhile, secure from alarm, Hasdrubal
first crossed the Pyrenees, then raised an
army in Gaul, in the kingdom of Bebryx.
He paid large amounts for soldiers, what
he had gained in war being spent on war.
The readiness of that spirited people was
enhanced by gold and silver from distant
mines, sent ahead of his march, and soon
the new camp was filled with mercenaries,
men born along the banks of the Rhône,
and through whose fields the Saône, most
sluggish of rivers, creeps. Winter was now
yielding to the milder air of spring, and
Hasdrubal marched swiftly through Gaul,
gazing in wonder at the pass his brother
had trod to cross the heights, ranking his
exploits with those of divine Hercules, in
whose footsteps Hannibal had followed.

When he reached the summit, occupying
Hannibal's camp, he cried: 'How could
Rome raise walls high enough to defend
that city, when these could not bar him?
I pray success will crown so great a deed,
no jealous god resenting our climb toward
the heavens.' Then he descended swiftly
from the summits, by an engineered road,
flying down in a series of forced marches.
Even Hannibal's first incursion had not
caused such mighty terror and confusion
in Italy. Now, a second Hannibal appeared.
The two armies would unite, these generals,
gorged on victory and Roman blood, were
combining to augment their forces, the foe
would rush headlong against Rome, where
Carthaginian spear-heads were embedded
in the gates from Hannibal's recent effort.

BOOK XV:522-559 ITALY REFLECTS, AND ROUSES CLAUDIUS NERO

Italy herself reflected angrily on the matter:
'Alas, you gods, am I held in such contempt
by these wild Carthaginians, I who allowed
Saturn to live and reign within my borders,
when he feared the power of his son Jove?
The tenth year is passing since Hannibal
first trampled my soil, a youth who has
only the gods left to defy, who raised an
army against me from the ends of the earth,
made light of the Alpine passes and fell
upon my lands, a burning fury. What heaps
of dead have I not hidden, how often has my
face been marred by the corpses of my sons!
No olive-tree ripens its berries for me now;
the sword reaps those unripe crops of mine;
the village roofs collapse into my lap, and
render my realm hideous with their ruins.

Must Hasdrubal too invade my wasted fields
and seek to scorch the little that war has left?
Wandering Africans then will till my fields,
and Libya will sow seed in Italy's furrows,
unless I bury in a single grave all their armies
that march so proudly across my wide plains.'
So Italy reflected, and as black night enclosed
the sleep of gods and men she hastened towards
the camp where Nero, the consul and scion of
Sparta, lay. From his turf ramparts, he observed
Hannibal, who was close at hand and kept his
army within the bounds of Lucanian country.
Italy now made herself appear in Nero's mind:
'Glory of the Clausi, chief hope of Rome now
Marcellus is lost, banish sleep, awake! For if
you would sustain your country's destiny, you
must dare what will make the conquerors, once
driven from our walls, shudder. The glitter of
Hasdrubal's weapons has covered the plains
where the Sena retains the name granted it by
that Gallic tribe. Unless you lead your forces,
swiftly, to battle, your aid will come too late,
and Rome will be ruined. Rise, act, march on!
The open fields by the Metaurus, are destined
by me to furnish the grave where the bones
of these Carthaginians will lie.' So saying, she
departed, seeming to draw after her the hesitant
general, opening the gates for the cavalry to exit.

BOOK XV:560-611 NERO AND LIVIUS JOIN FORCES

His heart aflame, Nero leapt from his bed inspired,
and raising his hands to the sky he prayed to Earth,
Night, the stars above, and the Moon, whose light
would guide them silently on their way. Then he
chose men fit for the great campaign. His march
lay through the fields of Larino, near the Adriatic
shores; of the warlike Marrucini, and the Frentani,

loyal in wartime; of that Abruzzo where men, happy in their labours, till the vine-clad hills. On he went, faster than winged flight or lightning-bolts, winter floods or Parthian arrows. Each man drove himself forwards. ‘On, move; Italy’s safety, whether Rome lives or dies, depends on you, thus the gods decree.’ So they shouted as they marched. Rather than his exhorting them, their general led them eagerly on, while, striving to match his speed, they increased their own, unwearied by the effort night and day. Meanwhile, in Rome, people trembled with fear, hearing the danger of defeat was growing, while arguing that Nero was far too complacent, that a single setback might rob them of their lives. ‘We have no more weapons, gold, men, blood to shed. Of course he chases Hasdrubal, unable to face Hannibal alone! Hannibal will return to force our gates, knowing our armies have left camp and marched far away. The new-comer and his proud brother will vie for the greatest prize, the destruction of Rome.’ So the senators murmured, troubled to the very heart, though they were deeply concerned as yet to maintain their dignity, considering any means to avoid impending servitude and the anger of the gods. While they lamented, Claudius Nero, entered Marcus Livius’ camp, under cover of nightfall, its ramparts a defence against Hasdrubal who was camped nearby. Livius, a warlike skilful general in the field, had formerly won great glory as a soldier in his youth, but later was condemned on a false charge by an unjust populace, and had buried himself in rural solitude for many a gloomy year. Yet when this crisis came, with its fears of imminent disaster, he was summoned again to serve, with so many generals fallen, setting aside resentment for his country’s sake. But this arrival of fresh forces under Claudius had

not escaped Hasdrubal's notice, though it
was cloaked by the shadows of the night.
He saw the dusty shields, the leanness of
men and horses from their rapid progress,
while the repeated trumpet-calls signalled
the armies of two generals combined. Why
if his brother Hannibal still lived had he
allowed their forces to unite? The only
strategy was to wait until the facts were
known, and to avoid a confrontation. He
therefore resolved to flee, nor were they
idle fears that determined him on flight.

BOOK XV:612-634 THE BATTLE OF THE METAURUS RIVER (207BC)

Night, the mother of sleep, had purged all
mortal hearts of their cares, while darkness
deepened the awful silence, when Hasdrubal
crept from camp, ordering his army to leave
noiselessly. In the moonless night they sped
swiftly through that sleeping countryside,
trying to make no sound. Yet the soil of Italy,
was aware of trampling feet, and sent them
on erroneous tracks in the darkness while,
favoured by the shadows, she drove them
in tight circles, retracing their own steps.
For where the Metaurus runs a winding
course between its curving banks, turning
back on itself in its stony bed, they wound
about in a narrow circuit, with vain effort,
the aid of darkness lost to their mistakes.
Dawn rose, exposing the fugitives. The gates
of the Roman camp opened and a fierce
cavalry charge ensued, a tempest of steel
hiding the field far and wide. There was as
yet no close encounter, but the missiles
fired in advance drank blood. Here Cretan
arrows flew through the air, destined to

prevent a Carthaginian retreat; there a hail
of javelins killed every man in its path.
Renouncing all thought of flight, the enemy
were forced to gather themselves hastily
in line of battle, vesting all hope in attack.

BOOK XV:635-657 THE OPPOSING GENERALS ADDRESS THEIR TROOPS

Hasdrubal (seeing their plight) seated tall
in their midst on his warhorse, stretched out
his arms and raised his voice: 'By the glory
you found at the limits of the world, by my
brother's deeds, I call on you to show that
Hannibal's brother is here. Fortune intends
teaching Italy a lesson in defeat, turning on
Rome the force that conquered Spain, and
fought so often by the Pillars of Hercules.
Perhaps my brother himself may arrive in
time to fight. Let him behold a fitting sight,
one worthy of him; so cover the battlefield
with corpses. Hannibal has conquered every
Roman general we might have feared; their
only hope lies with Livius, while he, aged
by rejection and isolation, is now a doomed
victim at your mercy. On, on, I summon you,
kill this general whom Hannibal might feel
ashamed to fight, and end his sad old age.'
On the other side, Claudius Nero, spoke thus:
'Why hold back from ending the mighty
struggle this war involves? Soldiers, you
have won great glory by your march, now
finish what is begun, by courage in the field.
Unless victory justifies our actions, we have
left camp for no valid reason, robbing it of
its defences. Be first to reap the honours; men
will remember how your coming won the day.'

BOOK XV:658-671 MARCUS LIVIUS ATTACKS

In another place, Livius addressed his troops,
his helmet doffed, his white hair conspicuous:
‘Here, youngsters, watch now how I attack in
battle. Enter wherever I split the ranks with my
sword, and close with steel forever those Alpine
passes that opened so readily to Punic invaders.
If we fail to break their line with sudden victory,
if Hannibal, that Carthaginian lightning-bolt,
should instantly arrive, what god will save us
from the shades below?’ Then he donned his
helm, and made good his threat with the blade,
waging war fiercely, with his white hair hidden.
Where the enemy ranks were closely-packed
he killed a man with every javelin he threw;
while before him the Macae fled in disorder,
and the warlike Autololes, and the long-haired
Gallic warriors from the banks of the Rhône.

BOOK XV:672-691 LIVIUS KILLS NABIS

Nabis, from the oracular sands of Ammon,
fought with his poisoned arrows, confident
of his safety in battle thinking the god would
protect him; and vowed proudly, but in vain,
to adorn his native shrine with Italian spoils.
His blue robes shone with Garamantian gems,
which glittered like the stars in the sky above,
while his helm gleamed with them, and his
shield was bright with gold. Horns coiled
on that helmet, and from it hung a sacred
ribbon to inspire terror and honour the god.
He carried a bow and a quiver of poisoned
arrows, steeped in asp venom, his weapons
of war. Leaning back in the saddle, he also,
as ever, supported a weighty Sarmatian pike
at his knee, to bear down on the enemy.

Now, with a great shout, he drove it through
Sabellus' body-armour, and was dragging
his victim away in triumph, while calling in
triumph on Ammon's name. But old Livius,
unable to bear the barbarian's proud wrath,
hurled his javelin and, a victor over the victor,
robbed Nabis, at a blow, of his prey and his life.

BOOK XV:692-710 THE DEATH OF RUTILUS

Hasdrubal heard, with grief, Nabis' cry as he
fell, and ran to him, driving a javelin through
Arabus from behind, who had begun to strip
the jewelled robes, and shield stiff with gold,
from the corpse. The wretch had grasped at
the garments with both hands, tearing them,
and baring the yet-quivering limbs. He fell
across the body of the man he was robbing,
restoring the sacred robes and gold ribbon.
Next Rutilus was killed by Canthus, lord
of that shore to which two brothers, those
indomitable Philaeni, had given their name.
Rutilius was wealthy, with a thousand sheep
bleating in his upland pens: he himself had
lived at ease, free of care, now tempering
the heat of the sun by dipping his flock in
the cool stream; now sitting, happily, on
the grass, to shear their fleeces gleaming
white as snow; or when the ewes were
brought home from pasture watching as
the lambs sought and found their mothers.
The metal of his treacherous shield was
pierced, and he died lamenting, all too
late, the leaving of his flocks and folds.

BOOK XV:711-734 LIVIUS PRESSES THE ATTACK

The Romans now attacked more fiercely,
driving onwards like a flood, a tempest,
a lightning-flash, breakers in a northerly,
or misty clouds that fly, high overhead,
when an easterly confuses sky and sea.
Behind their banners the lofty Gauls
were stationed, in the front line, yet
their ranks were shattered by a sudden
violent charge in the wedge formation.
Wearied now by their circuitous march,
breathless also after lengthy exertions,
tormented by the heat, they turned and
fled, with the unreliability characteristic
of their nation. The Romans hurled spears
at their backs, the arrows pursuing them
preventing their retreat. Thyrmis was slain
now at a single blow, Rhodanus by many,
while Morinus, hit by an arrow, in falling
was knocked from the saddle by a javelin.
Livius, loosening the reins, drove down on
the fugitives, thrusting his horse amongst
the retreating squadrons. There he severed
Mosa's swollen neck from behind with his
sword. The helmeted head fell heavily to
the earth, while the terrified steed carried
the body, still mounted, into the fray. Now
Marcus Cato, who was darting to and fro
at the heart of the action, cried: 'If only
Livius had opposed Hannibal, when we
lost the Alpine pass at the war's inception!
Alas, what a mighty arm Rome neglected!
How many Carthaginian lives have been
spared by the sad vote of a foolish crowd!'

BOOK XV:735-758 HASDRUBAL RALLIES HIS MEN

Meanwhile the Carthaginian line was folding,
the cowardice of the Gauls had made all fearful,
and Carthage's fortunes were ebbing, while
winged Victory turned her favour on Rome.
Tall in the saddle, Livius, the consul, rode
triumphant, as if he had shed his years and
grown in stature. Behold, Hasdrubal, now
appeared, a squadron grey with dust behind
him, and brandishing his spear he shouted
out to his men: 'Stand fast! Who is this foe
we retreat from? Shame on you! One old man
marred by the years is putting you to flight.
Is my arm less than it was, are you weary of
me? Belus was my ancestor; my line is kin
to Tyrian Dido; Hamilcar, famous in war, was
my father; my brother he whom neither lakes
nor mountains, rivers or plains can withstand.
Great Carthage ranks me second to Hannibal
and in the land along the Guadalquivir tribes
who have met me in battle say I match him.'
So saying, he entered the heart of the fray
and, as the consul's bright shield gleamed
full in his sight, he raised and threw his spear.
Passing between the edge of the shield and
the top of the breastplate it grazed the top
of Livius' shoulder, but that mistimed blow
drew little blood, and failed to penetrate his
body, denying Hasdrubal the glory he sought.

BOOK XV:759-777 THE ROMANS COUNTER-ATTACK

The Romans were troubled, their spirits fell
at the dismal sight, but Livius called out to
them: 'It is as if a woman's nails scratched
my skin, at the empty sound of trumpets, or
a child struck me a blow with its open palm.

Forward men, show what sort of wounds a
Roman arm can deal!' A vast cloud of spears
was launched, veiling the sun with its dense
shadow. Soon, the wide fields were covered
with the dead, in mutual slaughter, and those
corpses that fell at the river in such numbers
formed a bridge over the stream. So, when
Diana hunts the shady uplands, her mother
Latona looks on with joy and pride while
she beats the coverts of her Delian Mount
Cynthus, or crosses Maenalus with all her
Naiads, her companions, that furious host,
their sounding quivers filled with arrows.
There the wild creatures lie dead among
the cliffs and in their very lairs, in vales
and streams and caverns green with moss,
while that daughter of Latona, in her pride,
views her spoils from some mountain-top.

BOOK XV:778-808 THE DEATH OF HASDRUBAL

Nero, above all, hearing of old Livius' wound,
carved a passage through the middle of the fray.
and seeing the battle finely balanced, cried out:
'What then, what remains for Italy but to suffer?
If we cannot conquer here, how will we defeat
Hannibal?' Then he rushed madly into the midst
of his enemies, and found Hasdrubal raging in
the front line. Now, as a monster of the angry
sea will scour the waters endlessly for its prey,
then in its hunger see a fish far off in the waves,
and mark it out, as it swims below the surface,
before swallowing the wide waters and its prize,
so Nero was swift to strike, crying: 'You shall
no longer escape me. Here is no Pyrenean forest
to hide in, nor will you cheat me once again with
empty pledges, as you did once in Spain, where I
caught you, yet you won free with a lying treaty.'

So saying, he hurled his javelin and not in vain,
for the well-aimed tip lodged in Hasdrubal's side,
and he fell. Then Nero attacked him fearlessly,
with drawn sword, crushing the quivering limbs
with his shield-boss. 'If there is any last message
you would have me bear to your brother, I shall'
Nero cried, and Hasdrubal replied: 'Death holds
no terrors. Take your victory; the avenger of my
death is swift approaching. If you would send
my brother my last words, here is my message:
let him burn the Capitol as victor, and mix my
bones and ashes with those of Jove.' He longed,
fervently, to say more, but his mortal rage was
ended by the sword, his victor striking off that
treacherous head. And, their leader being slain,
his men, hope of victory lost, were slaughtered.

BOOK XV:809-823 HANNIBAL CHOOSES CAUTION

And now black night hid the light and the path
of the sun, while the Romans ate a frugal meal
and briefly slept. Then before day returned,
they carried their victorious banners back by
the same route to the camp, closing its gates
in their anxiety. There Nero, lifting the dead
general's head aloft on his spear-point, cried:
'Hannibal, with your brother's head we have
repaid you for Cannae, the Trebia, and Lake
Trasimene. Try now to wage treacherous war
on dual fronts, or summon two armies to you.
Such the reward for any who choose to cross
the Alps to reach you.' Hannibal suppressed
his tears, and made the disaster seem less in
bearing it bravely, while vowing beneath his
breath to sacrifice worthy victims in due time
to his brother's shade. Meanwhile he veiled
disaster with inaction, removing his camp to
a distance, and so avoiding the risk of battle.

End of Book XV of the Punica

BOOK XVI

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BOOK XVI:1-27 HANNIBAL RETREATS TO SOUTHERN ITALY

Grieving over the disaster that had occurred
both to his country and himself, Hannibal left
for southern Italy, and the territory of the Bruttii.
Here, behind his ramparts he nurtured plans for
renewal of the conflict, which he had temporarily
abandoned. So a bull, when turfed from his stall,
and robbed of his dominance of the herd, hides
in the forest, preparing for conflict in a distant,
secret glade: his fierce bellowing fills the woods;
he rushes over steep tracks, topples trees, attacks
the cliffs with his horns in furious anger, while
the herdsmen, looking on from some high hill,
tremble at his readiness to renew the encounter.
Hannibal's energy might have worn the Romans
down, if all other requirements had been present,
but he was thwarted by his countrymen's perverse
jealousy. Fresh supplies were denied him, and he
was forced to reign in his ardour and let it wither
in idleness. Yet his deeds had won him respect,
and the fear he inspired by his frequent bloody
victories in the past rendered him as if inviolable,
his life being held sacred. The name of Hannibal
was equivalent to weapons, equipment, and new
recruits. His army, without a common language,
divided by so many rituals and barbaric customs,
remained in step: respect inspired loyalty in defeat.
Nor was it only in Italy that the god of war smiled
on the Romans. Carthage was about to yield Spain,
and be driven from that gold-bearing land: Mago
also was to be deprived of his camp, and he, once
driven by fear, would sail swiftly towards Libya.

BOOK XVI:28-43 SCIPIO PREPARES TO FIGHT HANNO IN SPAIN

Behold, Fortune, not content with the favour she
had already shown him, was nurturing another
triumph for Scipio. For Hanno was approaching,
and his host of barbarians with clashing shields,
rousing the native Iberians, though too late. He
possessed no lack of courage, skill or cunning,
but it was Scipio he faced. The Roman general
eclipsed them with a greater force, as the stars
are eclipsed by the moon, and she by the sun's
light; as Atlas is the king of mountain peaks,
and the Nile the queen of rivers; as the Ocean
is vaster than the lesser seas. Hanno was still
fortifying his camp, in haste, for evening had
begun to spread its unfriendly shadows from
the darkening heavens when Scipio attacked,
and the half-built palisade they had started to
erect was flattened in the sudden rush: heavy
blocks of turf lay heaped over the fallen men,
their mound granting a sepulchre to the dead.

BOOK XVI:44-77 THE DEATH OF LARUS

Only a single man among the foe showed bravery
worthy of record, and his recognition by posterity.
He was a Cantabrian, Larus, a giant of a man, who
must have inspired fear even when lacking weapons.
He fought with a battle-axe, in the manner of his
people, and though he saw the men about him fall,
though all his comrades were slain, single-handedly
he took the place of the dead. If he met his enemy
head-on, he delighted in fuelling anger by striking
the man on the forehead; if the man was to his left,
he whirled his axe about, dealing sidelong blows;
and if a triumphant foe attacked him from behind,
undismayed he could wield his weapon in reverse,

a warrior to be feared in every way. But Scipio's brother Lucius, with a mighty effort, hurled his spear at Larus, cutting the plume that fluttered from his leather cap, the aim being high, while his raised axe drove the spear far away. Then the Spaniard, spurred on by wild anger, sprang forward with a shout, striking hard with his barbarous weapon. Both armies trembled, as the boss of Scipio's shield rang to the stroke of the heavy battle-axe, but Larus paid dearly for the blow, losing his right hand to Scipio's sword, his beloved weapon tight in its grasp. When this mighty bulwark had fallen, his ill-fated compatriots turned and fled as one, scattering over the countryside. It was now not so much a battle as a scene of ruthless extinction, here the slaughterers and there the slaughtered. Behold Hanno, dragged through their midst, hands bound behind his back, seeking, in chains, to beg for his life, (ah, how sweet is life and the light of day!) Scipio replied: 'Such are these who demand to rule us, to whom the sacred people of warlike Quirinus, and all Rome's citizens, must bow! Why renew the war, when you are so ready to save your life, by servitude?'

BOOK XVI:78-114 HASDRUBAL GISCO DEFEATED AT ILIPA (206BC)

Meanwhile a cavalry scout brought the news that Gisco, unaware of their loss, was marching swiftly to join the other army. Scipio rushed to meet him and, seeing the longed-for battle in his grasp, the enemy speeding to their death, he raised his eyes to the sky, crying: 'I ask no more than this, you gods. Today you bring the fugitives to battle and I am content. All else, my men, depends on your courage: forward, I

pray. Behold, my dead father, my dead uncle
are here to rouse your fury. O, my twin gods
of war, be with us, lead onwards for I follow.
Unless my prophetic spirit fails me, you shall
see slaughter, here, now, worthy of your fame.
How long till this war on Spanish soil be over?
When will the day dawn on earth when Carthage
trembles at the sight and sound of my onslaught?
He ended, and the hoarse blare of the trumpets
rang out, while the sky echoed to the thunder
of battle. They met; and though many are those
victims claimed by the angry sea, when Boreas,
Notus, and inexorable Auster, overwhelm ships
and men with their swelling waves; or when
the Dog-Star, Sirius, kindles his deadly fires
and scorches the parched earth with his fierce
heat; no less was the toll achieved by the sword,
by the furious conflict of mortals in that battle.
No upheaval of the earth could cost as many
lives, no deadly wild beasts raging through
their savage glades could work such carnage.
Plains and valleys ran with blood, and their
weapons were blunted. Africans and warlike
Spaniards fell alike. Yet one body of men,
weary, their armour dented, still stood and
fought their ground, and there Gisco wielded
his spear. Nor would the struggle have ended
that day, nor their valour failed, had an arrow
not pierced his mail, scoring the flesh beneath,
leading him to flee. He galloped from the field,
to a secret place then, riding by night along that
coastline, he reached the harbour of Tartessus.

BOOK XVI:115-134 MASINISSA DEFECTS FROM CARTHAGE

A Numidian prince, Masinissa, the right hand man
to Gisco in the battle, was later to achieve fame
by a lengthy alliance with, and loyalty to, Rome.

He was wearily snatching some sleep, persuaded
to it by the darkness, and the hardships of retreat,
when a bright flame was suddenly seen to wreathe
the crown on his head, gently catch his curling hair,
and spread over his shaggy brow. His servants ran
swiftly to quench the flame with water, but his aged
mother took it as an omen from the gods, crying:
'Be it so, heavenly ones, show favour and fulfil
this portent, May a flame forever light his brow.
My son, have no fear of such signs from above,
let not the sacred fire at your forehead alarm you.
It promises you alliance with the Roman people;
it will grant you a greater kingdom than that your
ancestors ruled, involving your name in Rome's
destiny.' So she prophesied, and the young man's
heart was stirred by so visible a token; nor had
Carthage recognised his valour, though Hannibal
himself at times had seemed no prouder in arms.

BOOK XVI:135-153 MASINISSA ENTERS THE ROMAN CAMP

Dawn was dispelling the dark clouds from the sky,
and had hardly tinged the faces of Atlas' daughters,
the Pleiades, with red, when Masinissa made his way
to the Roman camp, still, as yet, that of his enemies.
When he had passed the rampart, he was welcomed
by Scipio with a friendly look, then spoke as follows:
'A sign from the gods, and a prophecy of my sacred
mother's, and your great deeds blessed by the gods,
O leader of the Romans, have led me to part from
the Carthaginians, and brought me here, willingly.
If you saw me, O scion of Jove, resisting all your
lightning-bolts, you know I offer now a right hand
worthy of you. I am not acting thus on idle whim,
uncertainty of purpose, fickleness of heart, or hope
of chasing after the rewards of victory; I flee from
treachery, and a nation ever deceitful from the start.
Your campaign in Spain, having reached as far as

the Pillars of Hercules, is now complete; let us then
attack Carthage herself, the mother of war, together.
He who has been ten years the master of Italy, and
sets his scaling ladders against Rome's walls, must
be driven back by you to Libya, with fire and sword.'

BOOK XVI:154-169 SCIPIO AGREES TO AN ALLIANCE

So the Numidian leader spoke, then Scipio clasped
his hand saying: 'If our nation seems impressive to
you in war, we are even more so in our loyalty. So,
dismiss those two-faced allies of yours from your
mind. Great benefit will accrue to you, Masinissa,
to match your noble virtues; Scipio would sooner
be outdone in battle than in a display of gratitude.
As for your advice to carry this warfare to Libya,
time will tell; for such matters are never far from
my thoughts, and the war with Carthage grants me
no rest.' Then he gave the prince a fine embroidered
cape; and a horse, with purple trappings, he himself
had captured in downing Mago, and of proven spirit;
a golden bowl from which Hasdrubal used to pour
libations to the gods; and also a helmet with a crest.
Once their alliance had been confirmed, Scipio laid
plans for the swift overthrow of Carthage's citadel.

BOOK XVI:170-183 SCIPIO SEEKS SYPHAX'S AID

Syphax was the wealthy king of western Numidia,
a man not devoid of virtue; whom his innumerable
tribes looked to for justice, as far as its ocean shore.
He was rich in land, and horses, and those elephants,
huge creatures that spread terror on the battlefield,
with no lack of picked fighting men. Nor were any
richer in gold bars and ivory, or dyed more fleeces
in the Gaetulian vats. Scipio, keen to tap this wealth,
and aware of the risks if Syphax allied with Carthage,

ordered ships to sea, war in Africa already in mind.
When they reached harbour however, Gisco, sailing
the neighbouring coast in anxious flight, appeared
seeking fresh allies for his distressed country, and
to win Syphax's Numidian army to the Libyan cause.

BOOK XVI:184-228 SYPHAX ADDRESSES SCIPIO AND GISCO

Syphax's spirits rose on hearing that the generals of
both nations had arrived in his realm, nations at war,
struggling with all their might to decide which should
rule the world, and ordered them to be made welcome,
while the honour shown to his kingdom gratified him.
He scanned their faces with pleasure, then addressed
Scipio, before the latter had chance to speak: 'Finest
of the sons of Rome, I welcome you with serene mind
and intense admiration! I recall with pleasure the face
of your father, whom you resemble. For I remember
visiting Cadiz, Hercules' city, and its isle of Erythia.
I was eager to see the ocean and observe its tides, and
was impressed to find your kin, two mighty Roman
generals, camped on the banks of the Guadalquivir.
They gave me gifts, chosen from the spoils, weapons,
bridles which we had not deployed till then, and bows
not inferior to our javelins. They gave me veterans too,
to train my unruly hordes in your methods of Roman
warfare: yet when I offered the riches of my country in
return, bars of gold and ivory tusks, my offers were in
vain, for each would accept only a sword in a carved
ivory scabbard. Step gladly then beneath my roof, and
since fortune brings me a Carthaginian general, also,
over the waves, hear with equanimity what I now say:
you too Hasdrubal Gisco, who command for Tyrian
Carthage, I beg you, give ear and thought to my words.
Who is unaware of the furious tide of battle that rages
throughout Italy, threating Rome with ruin, and that
for ten years first Sicily then the shores of Spain have
been soaked in Carthaginian blood. Should not these

horrors of conflict end at last and both lay down their arms? Let you, Libya, and you, Italy, show restraint. Syphax will not be slow to act loyally towards you, as peacemaker and mediator.' Scipio however would allow him to go no further, explaining the customs of his people and the power invested in the Senate, bidding the king forego his expectation in the matter, the senators alone possessing authority to so decide. This proved sufficient hint, and the rest of that day was given over to food and wine, and when the feast was done they took their rest, freed in the darkness from the harsh and weighty fetters of state business.

BOOK XVI:229-257 SCIPIO SPEAKS PRIVATELY TO SYPHAX

Now early dawn emerged from her threshold bringing the new day, as the sun's horses exchanged their stalls for the yoke, he not yet mounting his chariot, though the sea was reddened by his impending flame: Scipio rose and went calmly to the royal palace. According to the custom of the country, Syphax kept lion cubs there, taming them by kindness, and was stroking their shoulders and the tawny manes as they played, handling their savage jaws fearlessly. Hearing that Scipio was present he donned his cape, wielding the sceptre of his ancient kingdom in his left hand, while his brow was bound with a white band, his sword being duly fastened at his side. Then Scipio, the conqueror of Spain, was summoned and both the king and his guest took seats of equal honour in a private room. Scipio spoke first: 'O Syphax, whose sceptre is held in reverence, when I had overcome the Pyrenean tribes, my first and most important task was to hasten to your kingdom, undaunted by the wide sea that lay between us. I ask nothing arduous or dishonourable of your realm: join heart and soul with Rome and share in her success. Your Numidian tribes, your land

that stretches to the Syrtes, your ancestral sway
over broad regions, none of these can bring you
greater glory than Roman valour, loyally allied,
and the honour that Rome will pay you. What
more can I say? Be assured, no god looks with
favour on those who attack the armies of Rome.'

BOOK XVI:258-276 SYPHAX ALLIES WITH ROME

Syphax listened, and with a smiling looks, agreed.
Embracing Scipio, he said: 'Let us confirm omens
of success, and summon the gods, Jupiter Ammon
he of the horned brow, and Jupiter of the Capitol,
to our mutual prayers.' Swiftly, an altar was built,
and the bull was about to meet the descending axe,
when suddenly the victim burst his bonds and leapt
away in flight from the altar, filling the palace with
his bellowing, startling the servants, dismayed by
his heaving chest and endless roar. And the sacred
band, his ancestral ornament, fell from the king's
head, leaving his temples bare. Such were the dark
omens granted the doomed monarch by the gods;
all the threatening portents of disaster were there.
And a time would come when Scipio, who now
humbly sought a treaty of alliance, would defeat
this king and oust him from his throne, to lead
him, in triumph, to the temple of the Thunderer.
Now, all being done, Scipio went to the harbour,
and sailed again with a favourable wind for Spain.

BOOK XVI:277-302 SCIPIO HOLDS CELEBRATORY GAMES IN SPAIN

The people gathered eagerly to meet him, while
the subject Pyrenees sent their various tribes, all
with one purpose; to name and salute Scipio as
their king, knowing no higher tribute than this.
But, gently rejecting their offers as unfitting for

a Roman, explaining the customs of his nation
and the dislike Rome had for the title of king,
he turned to his sole remaining object, given
that all enemies in Spain had been dealt with.
He summoned the Romans and the people of
the Guadalquivir and the Tagus, and addressed
the assembly: 'Since heaven's favour allowed
us to drive the Libyans from this extremity of
the world, since they are dead or now haunt
their native sands, so banished from the west,
I am determined to honour the tombs of my
kinsmen who died here, and grant their shades
the peace they demand. Favour me with your
attention and lend me your ears. When the sun
renews his heavenly course a seventh time, let
all who are skilled in arms or chariot-racing,
are fast of foot and eager for a prize, or love
to hurl the javelin through the air, come here
and compete with one another for the glory
of the victor's crown. I will give fine rewards,
glorious spoil from the Carthaginians' wealth,
and none will leave without a gift from me.'
So, Scipio's generosity stirred ambitious minds.

BOOK XVI:303-345 THE GAMES COMMENCE

The day of the event arrived, and the open plain
echoed to the sound of a vast crowd, as Scipio,
tears in his eyes, led a memorial procession and
performed token rites of burial. Every Spaniard
and every Roman soldier brought offerings to
cast on the blazing pyre. Scipio, holding cups
filled with milk and with sacred wine, sprinkled
the altars with fragrant flowers. Then he called
on the spirits to rise, recalled, in tears, the glory
of the dead, and did honour to their noble actions.
Then he turned to the race-course, designed to test
the speed of the horses, and began the first contest

of the games. With the starting-gates still barred, the eager crowd surged to and fro with a roar like the ocean and, in furious partisanship, fixed their eye on the barrier behind which the chariots waited. Now, the signal given, the bolts shot back noisily, and the first hooves had scarcely flashed in sight when a wild storm of cries rose to the sky. Leaning forward like the charioteers, each man studied that team he favoured, shouting at the swift lead horse. The ground shook with the spectators' enthusiasm, and the intensity robbed every man of his senses. They pushed forward, driving the teams on with their cries. A cloud of yellow dust rose from that sandy soil, veiling the charioteers' valiant efforts, and the horses' progress, in darkness. One man will back his favourite charioteer, another some noted lead horse, some trusting in that from their own country, others the fame of an ancient stud; one man is full of joyous hope for some novice, another the green old-age of a well-tried veteran. *Lampon* led from the start, a lead-horse bred in Galicia; the rest behind, he raced through the air, the chariot flying, as he galloped the course with huge stride, setting a breeze blowing in his wake. The crowd roared, thinking that after such a start the race was won, but those with more experience of the course, and deeper knowledge, criticised the charioteer for setting too fast a pace initially, protesting vainly, from afar, that he had tired his team with his efforts and held nothing in reserve: 'Why so fast then, Cyrnus (he being the charioteer), less whip and a tighter rein!' But he was deaf, alas, to their cries and flew on, unsparing of his horses, forgetting how much ground was yet to be covered.

BOOK XVI:346-374 THE CHARIOT RACE

Next came *Panchates,* a lead-horse bred in Asturia,
a chariot-length behind, no more. Conspicuous for
the four white feet and white forehead of his sires,
he was not very tall or handsome but full of fire,
and now his fierce spirit lent him wings, as he sped
over the plain, straining at the reins, seeming to grow
in stature and fly faster as he ran. His charioteer was
Hiberus, dressed in scarlet tunic of a Cinyphian dye.
Third, but neck and neck, ran *Pelorus* and *Caucasus,*
the latter a fractious beast that shunned the hand that
patted its flank, but loved to bite and champ the iron
in its mouth till the blood foamed; while the former,
more tractable and obedient to the rein, never swerved
aside taking the chariot with him, but held to the inside
grazing the turning-post. He was noted for the strength
of his neck and his dense rippling mane; strange to say
he had no sire, for *Harpe,* the mare, conceived him by
the spring breeze, and foaled him among the Vettones.
His chariot was manned by noble Durius; *Caucasus*
trusting to old Atlas as his driver, came from Aetolian
Tyde, that city founded by Diomede in his wanderings,
while it was said the stallion was bred of a Trojan line,
those horses the hero stole, a bold effort, from Aeneas
by the river Simois. Atlas was last, though with Durius
alongside, racing no faster, so one might have thought
the two were driving peaceably together, keeping level.

BOOK XVI:375-400 HIBERUS TAKES THE LEAD

With half the distance covered they quickened pace,
and the spirited *Panchates,* straining to catch the team
ahead, seemed to rear high, about to mount *Lampon's*
chariot, striking and rattling it, with out-flung forefeet.
Hiberus, his charioteer, seeing Cyrnus and his Galician
team tiring, and their chariot no longer leaping forward,

while the sweating horses were driven on by frequent harsh blows of the whip, leaned out above his horses' heads, and hanging there flicked *Panchates*, who chafed at racing behind, calling out to him: 'On, on, Asturian, who dare snatch the prize if you are here? Up, fly, glide over the ground now with all your speed, as if on wings! *Lampon* is breathing hard, his strength is gone, he has nothing left within him to carry to the winning post.' At this, *Panchates* leapt onward, as if he were once more starting from the gate, and Cyrnus, though swerving to thwart him, and straining to catch him, was left behind. The earth and sky echoed to the cries of the spectators, while *Panchates* ran on in triumph, lifting his head high, drawing on the other three horses completing the team.

BOOK XVI:401-439 ATLAS AND DURIUS STRUGGLE

The trailing charioteers, Atlas and Durius, swerved about, resorting to cunning; first the one trying to pass his rival on the left, then the other striving to overtake on the right, but both failing in their efforts. Finally, Durius, young and confident, leant forward and, jerking the reins, drove straight across his rival's path, so striking Atlas' chariot, then overturning it. Atlas, his age telling, cried out in rightful protest: 'What now? What wild manner of racing is this? You'll kill me and my team.' As he shouted, he fell headfirst from his shattered chariot, while the poor horses too fell sprawling to the ground, as the victor shook his reins and *Pelorus* surged up the centre of the track, leaving Atlas struggling to rise. Cyrnus and his weary team were soon caught, passed at a quickening pace, Cyrnus learning too late the merit of controlling one's speed at the start. Shouts of applause from his supporters now drove Durius on. *Pelorus'* head was at the anxious Hiberus' shoulders, the charioteer feeling hot foaming breath on his neck. Durius pressed harder, whipping his team on over

the ground, and not in vain, as, coming on the right,
he was, or seemed to be, neck and neck with his rival.
Full of the prospect of imminent glory he cried out:
‘Now, now is the time, *Pelorus*, to show you are
born of the west wind. Let horses of common breed
go learn how those sprung of divine seed excel them.
Win, and offer gifts to your sire, and rear him an altar!’
And had he not been deceived, by thoughts of success
and premature delight, into dropping his whip, even
as he spoke, Durius perhaps would have consecrated
the altar so vowed to the west wind. Now, as wretched
as if the victor’s garland had fallen from his head, he
vented his rage against himself, ripping the clothes,
the gold-embroidered garments, from his breast, in
tears, pouring out his complaints to the sky above.
With his whip gone, the horses no longer obeyed,
as he lashed at their backs, in vain, with the reins.

BOOK XVI:440-464 HIBERUS WINS, SCIPIO PRESENTS THE PRIZES

Meanwhile *Panchates* sped on to certain victory,
taking the first prize with head aloft, as a light
breeze rippled the mane at his neck and shoulders,
steeping out proudly he displayed his noble limbs,
and a mighty shout greeted his win. Each charioteer
received a battle-axe with inlaid work in pure silver,
while the respective prizes differed greatly in value.
Hiberus received a swift steed, a not unworthy gift
from the Numidian king; Durius, second in merit,
two goblets gilded with gold of the Tagus, taken
from a vast heap of Carthaginian plunder; while
the third prize, granted to Cyrnus, was the shaggy
hide of a savage lion, and a Carthaginian helmet
with bristling crest; while, Scipio, summoned
Atlas finally to receive a prize, acknowledging
his age, and ill-fortune in having fallen when
his chariot was wrecked. This was a handsome
slave to serve him, and a cap of Spanish leather.

When all was done, Scipio called competitors
to the delights of a foot-race, offering prizes to
rouse their eagerness. ‘Whoever wins this next
competition shall receive the helmet in which
Hasdrubal overawed the armies of Spain; while
the second will take away this sword my father
stripped from Hyempsa’s corpse; while a bull
shall console the runner who comes in third.
The rest must be content with a pair of javelins
each, their metal supplied by the Spanish mines.’

BOOK XVI:465-488 THE FOOT-RACE

Two fine youths, Tartessus and Hesperus, showed
themselves, together, amidst the spectators’ cheers.
They were from Cadiz, the noted Phoenician colony;
while next to appear was Baeticus, showing his first
beard; Cordoba gave him his name, after its river,
the Baetis (or Guadalquivir), and the city generously
backed her favourite’s success. Next, Eurytus had
the circuit echoing to acclaim, red-haired but with
flesh as white as snow; Xativa saw his birth, and
he was reared on its high hill, while his parents
were here, loving and anxious, to see him compete.
Lamus and Sicoris, sons of warlike Lleida, came
after, followed by Theron, who drank of the river
Lima, or the Spanish Lethe, which as it flows by
washes its shores with the waters of forgetfulness.
They all waited, poised, leaning forwards, hearts
beating high with the longing for fame, then, on
hearing the trumpet sound, sprang through the air,
swifter than arrows launched from the bow. All
shouted their favourite’s name, eagerly standing
on tiptoe, crying out breathlessly for their choice.
The string of fine runners flew over the plain, and
left not a footprint behind on the sand. Every one
of them young and handsome, swift and worthy.

BOOK XVI:489-526 EURYTUS IS THE WINNER

When half the course was run, Eurytus moved in
front, ahead by a little, but not by much. Close
behind was bold Hesperus, no slower, on the heels
of the former. Eurytus was happy to take the lead,
Hesperus was content with hopes of catching him,
so they increased the pace, spirit driving body on,
while their efforts added to their youthful charm.
Behold, Theron, last of the seven, running easily,
now felt he had sufficient wind and, raising his
game, took all by surprise, exerting the strength
he had been husbanding, with a sudden burst of
speed, and setting a breeze behind him. Almost
he seemed like Mercury, flying through the air,
winged sandals on his feet. The spectators stood
amazed, as he passed one runner after another,
till, last before, he now was third, closing fiercely
on Hesperus. Not only Hesperus but Eurytus too,
the favourite to win, seemed startled by his speed.
Tartessus ran fourth, but his efforts would prove
idle if the three in front maintained their distance;
he followed his brother but Theron was between,
the latter's patience at an end, such that with one
fierce turn of speed he flew over the ground and
overtook Hesperus who was filled with rage. One
rival was left to pass, and the sight of the finish
close at hand spurred on their weary limbs, each
while hope was yet alive, summoning his strength
for a last remaining effort, Theron exhausted from
the struggle, Eurytus gripped by fear at his heart.
Abreast, and racing side by side, they might have
crossed the line together and shared first prize, but
Hesperus, falling behind, grasped the loose hair at
Theron's snow-white neck, and pulled, such that,
his rival hampered, he passed him joyfully, flying
on in his triumph to claim the victor's just reward.
He carried off the glittering helm, a splendid gift,
while the others gained their promised prizes too.

A green garland crowned their uncut hair, while
each youth brandished javelins of Spanish steel.

BOOK XVI:527-556 THE SWORD-FIGHT

A more serious competition between their elders
now ensued, a version of real warfare, with naked
swords at close quarters. These were not convicts
forced to fight as punishment for a life of crime,
rather courage spurred them on, and love of glory.
It was a sight worthy of the Roman sons of Mars,
this recreation of their appointed task. One pair of
twin brothers also met here in an impious struggle
for the sceptre (what crimes have kings not dared
for a throne, what wickedness remains?), though
that vast circle of spectators cursed such madness.
Yet such was the vile custom of their nation, and
the brothers risked their lives for a father's crown.
They met with the blind fury of men maddened
by a longing for power, and dying together bore
to the shades minds sated with killing. The blades
driven home by both with equal strength, pierced
the guts, wounding them mortally and, as their
furious spirits fled reluctantly with their breath,
the last words they uttered still were curses. In
death their enmity persisted; for when a single
pyre consumed both bodies, the flames refused
to meet but split apart, their ashes refusing to
mingle. Now, the other swordsmen received
their gifts, varying according to their courage
and their skill. Some led away oxen trained
to the plough, others acquired slaves from
among the Moorish captives, hunters skilled
in tracking in the wild. Silver objects were
awarded too, fine clothes from out the spoils,
war-horses and glittering plumed helmets –
all gifted from the defeated Libyans' plunder.

BOOK XVI:557-599 THE GAMES END: SCIPIO RETURNS TO ROME

Now to end the spectacle, men sought honour
in throwing the javelin, striving to hit the mark.
Burnus, of noble ancestry, came from the banks
of the Tagus where golden sand loads the yellow
waters; Glagus was famous for a throw that could
outpace the wind; Aconteus was a hunter whose
lance the swiftest deer could not evade; Indibilis
had long sought to fight the Romans but was now
allied; and Ilerdes, who shot birds from the clouds,
was a brave man in battle. Burnus hit the mark and
won first prize – a girl skilled in dyeing wool with
Gaetulian purple. Ilerdes, his throw not far behind,
came second, and he won a lad to whom it seemed
but a game to hunt and kill all the deer to be found.
Aconteus was third, and his reward was a pair of
hounds, eager to chase the wild boar with their cry.
Once the awards were made, and approved by wild
applause, Scipio's brother, with Laelius, both clad
in gleaming purple, gladly proclaimed the names
of the mighty dead, the Scipios' kin, summoning
the spirits, and hurling their spears as they spoke,
joyfully honouring their sacred ashes and granting
additional glory to the games. Then Scipio, whose
face showed his happiness, rewarded his faithful
comrades with gifts equal to their merits, giving
his brother a breastplate plated with solid gold,
Laelius a pair of swift Asturian harness horses.
Then he rose and threw his conquering spear with
a mighty effort, declaring it a tribute to the dead.
Wondrous to tell, the speeding missile halted in
mid-flight, and rooted itself in the ground before
their very eyes, while branches and leaves grew
suddenly and an oak-tree, formed on the instant,
stood there, casting its spreading shade. Seers,
foretelling the future, cried that Scipio should
expect greater things to come, for the gods had
clearly shown it so, and revealed it by this sign.

After driving the last Carthaginian from the coast,
and avenging his kin and country, Scipio made
his way to Italy, savouring the prediction, while
Fame made of his march a triumphal procession.
There, the nation had no more pressing a desire
than to entrust the very consulship to their young
general, with Libya as his province. But older,
cooler heads, minds averse to the risks of war,
frowned on rash adventure and, cautious in their
fear, shrank from the thought of serious defeat.

BOOK XVI:600-644 FABIUS ADVISES AGAINST AN AFRICAN CAMPAIGN

Thus, when Scipio, as consul, by the power of
his great office opened the debate in the Senate,
and asked that the authority to destroy Carthage
be his, old Fabius opened his aged mouth to say,
in a raised voice: ‘My age and honours are such,
years and glory enough, that I can have no fear
Scipio will consider my opposition to his great
scheme as stemming from jealousy. Fame is
busy enough with my name, and such deeds as
mine need no fresh praise. Yet, as I live, I cannot
fail to do my duty by my country or wrong my
conscience by staying silent. Will you undertake
a fresh campaign in Libya? Is our Italy then free
of the enemy? Is it not enough to defeat Hannibal?
What greater prize do you seek on Africa’s shores?
If fame is the spur that drives us, the field to reap
is here. Fortune has granted you an enemy worthy
of your sword nearer home. Italy’s soil would now
drink the blood of that fierce general, now, at last.
Where would you drag the army and the standards?
First the conflagration in Italy must be quenched.
You would go, and leave a reviving foe behind
you? And like a traitor strip the seven hills of men?
While you are laying waste to Syrtis’ barren sands,
will not this plague descend on Rome, which he

has already viewed, and attack the Capitol, Jove's seat, while it retains neither men nor weapons? What would he not pay to have you relinquish Rome? Must we then summon you from those African shores, when the lightning-bolt of war strikes us, as Fulvius was recalled from Capua? Conquer at home and purge Italy from war, she who has mourned her dead for thirteen years! Yet you must go meet the far-off Garamantes, and go earn a triumph, against Nasamonians! The dire straits Italy is in preclude such things. Your father, who was not slow to add honour to your house, was on his way, as consul, to the banks of the Ebro, yet when Hannibal had crossed the Alps and was descending to attack us, your father recalled his men, and was first to place himself zealously in Hannibal's way. Are you, as consul, ready to leave a victorious enemy behind you, hope by that to drive these Libyans from our land? If he remains calmly where he is, refusing to follow you and your force to Libya, you will curse your unseeing strategy when Rome is taken. Yet if, anxiously, he uproots his standards, follows your fleet, will he not be that same Hannibal whose army you gazed at from the walls of Rome?' Thus Fabius spoke, to loud approval from the old.

BOOK XVI:645-700 SCIPIO WINS ACCEPTANCE OF HIS PLAN

Then Scipio answered: 'When those two noble generals died, and all of Spain had fallen beneath Carthage's yoke, neither you, Fabius, nor any other of those who share your opinions rushed to their aid. Young though I was, as I confess, I faced the storm alone, risking my life, though the heavens were falling, to draw all danger to myself. Then my elders called it an error to trust

in a mere lad as general, this same seer calling it
an ill-thought out campaign. I thank and praise
the gods in whose hands lie the Roman people.
This lad too young in years, unaccustomed to war,
not mature enough to fight, this Scipio, recovered
Spain for Rome, and undefeated routed the Punic
host, followed the sun to its setting beyond Atlas,
and expelled the Libyans from the western world;
nor did I withdraw from Spain till I saw Phoebus
sink his chariot in the ocean from Roman shores.
With kings I won alliance. Now only Carthage
remains for my final effort. So Jupiter, father of
the endless centuries declares. Yet, behold, old
men tremble at the thought of Hannibal, unless
their sorry fears are mere pretence, as ending this
long series of disasters would augment my glory!
My sword has now experience of war, my young
strength has grown. Do not manufacture delays;
rather let the destiny the gods reserve for me run
its course, and the shame of past defeat be erased.
Let the glory of avoiding losses be achievement
enough for a cautious Fabius, a Delayer gaining
all by his inaction, yet Mago would not have run
from me, nor Hanno, nor Gisco, nor Hamilcar,
if I had sat idle in camp, and refused all conflict.
If a Carthaginian boy, barely entered on manhood,
can attack the people of Rome, her walls, and our
sacred stream, the yellow Tiber, and devour Italy
in a lengthy conflict, shall we shrink from sending
an army overseas into Libya, to trouble the roofs
of Carthage? Their wide shores have felt no danger,
their lands remain undisturbed, quietly enriched by
peace. Let Carthage feel fear, she for so long feared,
and let her learn that, though Italy is not yet rid of
Hannibal, we have men and arms enough to spare.
Your policy of caution lets him grow old in Italy,
for fifteen years he has dyed our rivers with blood,
but I will bring him, fearful and trembling, to witness
too late his nation’s capital consumed by fire. While

Rome still finds the shameful traces of Hannibal's
attack upon her walls, shall Carthage, still secure,
hear of our struggles, only, and war with open gates?
May our insolent enemy indeed pound at our citadel
with his Punic battering-rams if he does not before
such time hear the temples of his own gods shudder
to the flames we kindle.' The Senate was roused at
this and, as destiny decreed, agreed to Scipio's plan.
Praying that the outcome might be a fortunate one
for Italy, they saw him transport his army overseas.

End of Book XVI of the Punica

BOOK XVII

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BOOK XVII:1-32 THE IMAGE OF CYBELE

The Sibyl once prophesied in ancient times
that to drive an invader from Italian soil,
the Romans must invite Cybele, Mother
of the Gods, to leave her home in Phrygia,
and set up a shrine to her within their walls;
the goddess must be welcomed on landing
by whomever the Senate as a whole chose
as the most virtuous among those present.
That was a title better and nobler than any
triumph! Now Cybele, having been invited,
was nearing shore on a Roman vessel, and
Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, chosen
above all others by the nobles, hastened
to meet this foreign deity, he being nephew
to Scipio, the general recently approved as
commander of the African campaign, as we
have seen, thus he was possessed of many
an illustrious ancestor. Welcoming divine
Cybele after the long voyage, standing tall,
his arms outstretched in prayer, he brought
the vessel to the sounding mouth of Tuscan
Tiber, where women were to haul the tall
ship, with her image, upstream with ropes.
The hollow cymbals clashed all around,
vying with the hoarse note of the drums.
And her host of eunuchs were also there,
those haunting the twin summits of Mount
Dindyma, who revel in the cave of Cretan
Dicte, or know the heights of Phrygian Ida
and its hushed sacred groves. But amidst
the wild cries and prayers of the joyful
crowd, the sacred ship refused to answer
to those hauling on the ropes, stuck fast
suddenly, motionless in the water. Then
a priest of Cybele cried from amidships:
‘Beware, no guilty hand must touch those

ropes! Away, away with all you profaned
ones, leave, take no part in this chaste task
while the goddess remains content simply
to warn. But any woman who is chaste in
thought, and conscious of bearing herself
unstained, let her, though she do so alone,
undertake, single-handedly, this pious duty.'

BOOK XVII:33-58 CLAUDIA FREES THE IMAGE

Then Claudia, of the ancient house of the Claudii,
she of whom the people thought ill, due to false
reports, turned her gaze towards the vessel, and
stretched out her arms, crying: 'Heavenly Mother,
goddess who begot the divine powers we worship,
whose children cast lots for dominion over earth
and sea and sky and the shades below, if my body
is still free of stain, bear witness, goddess, prove
my innocence, let me loose this ship at a touch.'
Then she confidently grasped the rope; suddenly
the roar of Cybele's lions was heard, the drums
beat loud in their ears though none touched them,
and the ship moved on as if driven by the breeze,
passing Claudia who was dragging it upstream.
At once their hearts were filled with hope that
the end of war and its destruction was at hand.
Scipio hurried to leave Sicily for North Africa,
the waves far and wide were covered with his
advancing fleet. He had appeased the sea god
with the sacrifice of a bull, its entrails thrown
into the blue waters, when Jupiter's eagles,
that bear the lightning-bolts, came into view,
flying from the home of the gods through a
clear sky, showing the path over the sea that
the ships should follow. Their cries were an
omen of success, as they flew through the air,
near enough that those watching could still
see them, the fleet following where they led,
till it reached the shores of faithless Carthage.

BOOK XVII:59-82 SYPHAX ALIGNS WITH CARTHAGE

Nor was Carthage slow to meet the oncoming
storm, she had marshalled a king's resources,
Syphax's wealth, and his Numidian warriors
against the vast force and its famous general;
Syphax being Carthage's best hope and main
threat to the Romans. The Numidians, filling
the shores, plains and wide valleys alike, rode
bare-backed as was their custom, their clouds
of javelins hurtling through the air, darkening
the sky. Syphax, renouncing all his pledges,
the sworn alliance and the ties of hospitality,
the taking of food together, had broken faith
and that sacred law: seduced by an ill-judged
passion, the bride he took cost him his throne.
She was beautiful, the daughter of Hasdrubal
Gisco; and as soon as Syphax had welcomed
her to the high bridal-chamber, as if fired by
the wedding-torch for the first time, he turned
his forces over to his father-in-law, breaking
his treaty of friendship with Rome, granting
Carthage his host of warriors as a bridal gift.
Scipio's first action was to threaten Syphax:
and envoys were sent to him with a warning,
advising him to remain in his own kingdom,
be mindful of the gods, and keep his pledge;
his bride and his Carthaginian alliance would
do him little good among the Roman ranks.
Indeed, if he reneged, then an over-fond and
compliant husband would pay with his life
for this blind indulgence in amorous passion.

BOOK XVII:83-108 THE ROMANS ATTACK

But Scipio's threats and warnings were in vain,
falling on deaf ears. So the general, angered by
the rejection of his advice, turned to the sword

and, swearing that the solemn oaths of alliance had been broken, began active warfare by every possible means. Scipio now attacked the enemy camp under cover of night, and their huts being made from woven rushes and reeds, fashioned like the isolated huts of the Moorish herdsmen, set them on fire silently, hidden by the shadows. Then, as the scattered flames united to spread the conflagration, feeding quickly, with a fierce crackling, on that wealth of fuel, the flames rose brightly to the heavens driving clouds of smoke upwards in the glare of the flying sparks. That fatal scourge blew like a gale through the camp, Vulcan consuming the dry reeds with a noisy exhalation, as every hut caught fire. Many men, waking suddenly, felt the blaze before they saw it, while the flames stifled a host of cries for help. That fiery force spread everywhere, in triumph, seizing men and weapons in its fierce embrace. The scourge broke all bounds, and the burning camp sent white ash rising to the distant sky. The fire, roaring noisily, made a gigantic leap to surround Syphax' own quarters and would have consumed him, had an attendant, fearing disaster, not dragged him, cursing from his bed.

BOOK XVII:109-148 SYPHAX IS CAPTURED (203BC)

Later, when the Carthaginian and Numidian leaders united their forces behind common defences, and a fresh levy of men from his whole realm had repaired the night's disaster, anger, shame, and a third factor, his obsessive passion, stirred the king, who breathed out savage threats and gnashed his teeth as he recalled how fire had gripped the camp, and how he had been narrowly rescued from its flames, naked among embarrassed soldiers.

He still declared no one could have beaten
Syphax in broad daylight beneath the sun.
Such was his wild claim, yet Atropos was
already planning to put an end to insolence,
and would allow no more; the thread of that
proud boaster's life being almost complete.
Now, as he rushed from camp, like a great
torrent which sweeps rocks and trees along,
carving a fresh channel, widening its course
with the power of the current, he rode ahead
summoning his men to follow. Against him
were the eager Roman ranks, who seeing him
in the distance, raised their weapons and ran
forward, each man saying to himself: 'See,
the Numidian king rides ahead, challenging
us to battle! Let my sword gain the glory!
He has broken his word to our noble general,
and profaned the gods' altars. Let it suffice
him to have escaped us once, in that blaze!'
Such were the thoughts as they hurled their
javelins with full force. A first spear lodged
in the face of the king's warhorse, and with
blood pouring from its nostrils the animal
reared, beating the air with its forefeet, then,
in pain and fury, fell, tossing its wounded
head from side to side, while betraying its
rider to the enemy force. They fell upon him,
and though Syphax tried to pull the weapon
from the wound, and use it to lever himself
from the ground, flight was impossible and
he was seized. Then, chained and fettered,
alas (a true warning never to trust to fate),
the hands that had held the sceptre being
tightly bound, he was led away; a king
toppled from his high throne who had
seen whole tribes and their chieftains at
his feet, and whose control of the coast
had stretched to the Atlantic shore. Once
Syphax' forces were overthrown, those
of the Carthaginians were slaughtered,

and Hasdrubal Gisco, no favourite of
the war-god but rather noted for endless
flight, gave up the fight and fled again.

BOOK XVII:149-200 HANNIBAL VOWS TO SAVE CARTHAGE

Carthage, with all her limbs severed, now
depended on a single man; and, even in his
absence, the name of Hannibal prevented
her great realm from sliding into utter ruin.
He remained, and in her hour of extreme
danger she was forced to summon him to
her aid and support. Finding divine favour
deserting them, they rallied to him in fear.
Envoys promptly set sail, crossing the sea
to recall him, with a plea from his country;
warning that, should he choose to linger,
the city of Carthage might exist no more.
Dawn of the fourth day brought the ship
to Italy, where Hannibal was troubled by
wild dreams. For while resting at night
from the burden of care, he had a vision
of his being attacked by Flaminius, Paulus,
Gracchus, all with drawn swords, driving
him from the soil of Italy, while a ghostly
army, from Cannae and Lake Trasimene,
marched against him, forcing him to sea.
He, eager to escape, wished to flee by his
familiar route across the Alps, and clung
to the Italian realm with all his might, but
that shadowy host thrust him into the cruel
deep, yielding him to the storm-winds to
be driven far off. He, still disturbed by this
vision, was now approached by the envoys
with their message. They recounted their
nation’s extreme danger, how the Numidian
army had been overthrown, how Syphax was
now chained by the neck, not allowed to die

but kept alive to grace Scipio's triumphant procession to Jove's temple; how Carthage was shaken and dismayed by the repeated flights of Hasdrubal Gisco, who now held the reins of the state. Sadly they told of how they had seen two camps burn in the still of night, and Africa alight with ruinous flames. Scipio moved with speed, threatening to destroy Carthage with deadly fire, while Hannibal lingered on the Bruttian coast, too late to return with tales of his deeds. When they had spoken, revealing these events and their fears, they wept, kissing his right hand, as if worshipping a god. Hannibal listened with a fixed and stern gaze, kept silence, and considered deeply and anxiously whether Carthage deserved such loyalty; then he answered thus: 'O, dire is the fate that attends on mortal men! O, how envy prevents great things from flourishing, intolerant of glorious ascent! I might have overthrown Rome long ago, sacked her and levelled her to the ground, made her citizens slaves, dictated terms, but I was denied money, arms, and fresh recruits for an army wearied by victories. Hanno saw fit to cheat my men of even the bread they eat; yet now all Africa is scorched by fire, and the Roman lances beat on the gates of Carthage, Hannibal is his country's glory, her only refuge; now her last hope depends on his right arm. Well, I shall uproot the banners, as our Senate decrees; and save both the walls of Carthage and this Hanno!'

BOOK XVII:201-235 HANNIBAL LEAVES ITALY

Once he had uttered that speech, he launched
the tall ships and sailed with many a lament.
None dared to attack, as he departed, none
called him back; all thought it a gift of heaven
that he should go of his own accord and set
Italy free. Men prayed for a following wind,
content to see the coast devoid of the enemy,
just as when a gale ends, and the wind drops,
leaving the sea to the sailor, whose prayers
are humble, demanding no friendly breeze,
it being enough that the storm is over, and
the ensuing calm as fine as a swift voyage.
But while the Carthaginian soldiers gazed
at the waves, Hannibal still fixed his eyes
on the coast of Italy, as silent tears flowed
down his cheeks, and he sighed, time and
again, like an exile sent to some far shore
leaving his home and native land behind.
As the wind rose and the ships began to
make their way, as the hills diminished in
the distance till Italy vanished, Hannibal
ground his teeth, thinking: 'Am I mad,
to return thus unworthily, putting an end
to my desire for Italy? Better that Carthage
be consumed by flame, and Dido's name
be lost forever! Was I insane, not to have
carried my red-hot spear from Cannae to
the Capitol, hurled Jove from his throne?
I should have scattered fire over the seven
hills, that lay undefended; I should have
doomed that city to the same fate as Troy,
and to the very fate of their ancestors there.
Why do I torment myself thus? What now
prevents me invading in force once more,
or marching again against Rome's walls?
I will go, I will return through the remnants

of my former camps, and tread the familiar
road to the Anio. Turn the fleet, point our
prows back toward Italy! I warrant that a
beleaguered Rome will soon recall Scipio!'

BOOK XVII:236-267 NEPTUNE ROUSES THE TEMPEST

While Hannibal raged, so furiously, Neptune,
viewed the deep and saw the fleet turning back
to shore. Then the ruler of the sea shook his
blue-green locks, churned the sea from its bed,
and drove the flood above the shore-line. Then
he swiftly summoned the winds from Aeolus'
rocky cave, veiling the sky with storm-clouds
and heavy rain. He stirred, with his trident, all
the profound recesses of his realm and smote
the sea, to east and west, troubling the whole
surface of the ocean. The foaming waves rose,
dashing against the rocks, First, cloudy Auster,
the south-wind, rising among the Nasamones,
caught up the waters of Syrtis leaving it bare;
Boreas, the north-wind, followed, snatching
up the wide waves on its black wings, bearing
them away; Eurus, the dark easterly, roared, in
an opposing gale, and seized its watery share.
Now lightning rent the sky, the thunder rolled,
the implacable tempest racing toward the ships.
Fire, rain, waves, and angry winds combined,
while a darkness like night covered the ocean.
Behold, a southerly gust struck Hannibal's
flagship astern, roaring against the yardarm
(the rigging whistling and creaking harshly)
lifting a mountainous wave from the dark
depths that broke high above Hannibal's head.
Shuddering, gazing at sea and sky, he cried:
'Happy were you, my brother Hasdrubal, who,
dying, became the equal of the gods! You fell
gloriously, meeting death at a soldier's hand,

you whom fate allowed to bite the dust of Italy
as you died, while I was not allowed to lose my
life at Cannae, where Paulus and many another
illustrious spirit fell, nor to descend to Hades,
struck down by Jupiter's lightning bolt, as I
carried burning fire-brands against the Capitol.'

BOOK XVII:268-291 VENUS BEGS NEPTUNE TO CALM THE WATERS

While he complained, twin waves, powered by
opposing winds, struck the sides of the vessel,
and drove it beneath the mass of dark water,
as if a hurricane had sunk it. Thrust upward,
by heaving vortices of black sand, it rose to
the windy surface once more, hanging above
the depths, held by the gales on an even keel.
But the harsh southerly sent two ships against
jagged reefs below the cliffs, a sad and pitiful
sight, their prows shattering as they struck.
There, the hulls were split by the sharp rocks,
their frames breaking apart with a loud crack.
Now tangle of debris appeared: over the wide
surface of the sea helmets with scarlet plumes,
and weapons, floated; Capua's treasure from
her heady days; Italian plunder reserved for
Hannibal's triumph; tripods and tables and
images of the gods whom the Romans had
worshipped in their misery. Now, Venus,
appalled at the sight of the raging tempest,
cried out to Neptune, the lord of the seas:
'You from whose waters I rose, you have
raged enough; enough of these grave threats.
I pray you, spare the rest, or cruel Carthage
may claim her hero indeed invincible in war,
and that the Romans, my people, needed all
the waters of ocean to dispose of Hannibal.'
So Venus: and the swollen waves grew calm…
as both sides drove their forces towards battle.

BOOK XVII:292-340 HANNIBAL EXHORTS HIS TROOPS BEFORE ZAMA

Hannibal, a veteran soldier, knew how to raise
men's courage with praise, and roused them
to the heights of fury, inflaming their hearts
with love of glory: 'You there brought me dead
Flaminius' blood-wet head, I know the hand;
and you ran in first to strike the giant Paullus,
driving your blade to the bone; and you bear
glorious armour stripped from brave Marcellus;
and yours was the sword that Gracchus wet
with his life-blood as he fell. There I see that
hand which laid fierce Appius low, your spear
launched from the summit of the rampart, as
he attacked high Capua's walls; and there
another arm, of lightning quickness, which
pierced noble Fulvius' chest more than once.
You who killed Crispinus in battle, come
stand by me in the front rank; and you stay
by my side, in the battle, you who at Cannae,
as I well remember, triumphing in your fury,
brought me Servilius' head, fixed on a pike.
O bravest son of Carthage, I see your face
as formidable as your sword, I see your
flashing eyes, as I saw them by Trebia's
famous blood-filled stream, when, despite
his struggles, you clasped a Roman tribune
in your arms and drowned him in its depths.
And you, who first dyed your blade scarlet
with the elder Scipio's blood beside Ticinus'
chill stream, complete your task, and prove
that his son is mortal. Need I fear, even though
the gods themselves came to fight, while you
stand firm, you whom I saw reach peaks that
touch the sky, as you sped through the Alps;
while I see before me you who, sword in hand,
set fire to Arpi's wide plains? And you, who
hurled the first spear against the walls of Rome,
unwilling to concede that glory to myself, shall

I find you slower now? And you, indeed, do you
need my exhortation, who when I opposed that
thunder-cloud and lightning, Jove's wrath itself,
told me to scorn all that vain sound and fury, and,
before your general, sought the Capitol's heights?
Need I speak of you, who destroyed Saguntum by
your skill, and won glory in our first campaign?
I summon you, to maintain your former name
in a manner worthy of yourselves and of me.
I myself, favoured by the gods, have grown old
in conquest, and now I return, after fifteen years,
to my grieving country, dependent upon you to
ensure I see my home, so long unvisited, my son,
the face of my ever-faithful wife. Neither Rome
nor Carthage have the strength to fight a second
battle. This day will decide the contest between
us for the mastery of the world.' So Hannibal
spoke. Yet when Scipio opened his mouth to
address his Roman soldiers, they, impatient
of delay, looked only for the signal for battle.

BOOK XVII:341-369 JUNO ASKS JOVE TO SPARE HANNIBAL

As Juno viewed all this from a distant cloud,
Jove, noting her keen gaze and sad face, spoke
to her gently: 'Tell me, wife: what grief eats
at your heart? Is it Hannibal's situation, your
concern for your dear Carthage, torments you?
But consider, yourself, the folly of that nation.
I ask you, sister, when shall their breaking of
treaties, their resistance to destiny and Roman
rule, end? Carthage has not suffered more and
endured more than you yourself have done in
their defence. You troubled land and sea; set
that proud youth against Italy, and Hannibal
has been first among generals for sixteen years.
It is time to calm the nations. The end is come,
and now the gates of war must be closed.' So,

Juno, petitioned him: ‘In sitting here among
the clouds, I do not seek to influence events
already fixed, nor summon armies and extend
the war; I only ask (since your kindness wanes,
while your first passion for me has cooled) what
you have power to grant, and nothing opposed
to fate’s thread; let Hannibal give way before
his enemies, since it pleases you, and let Troy’s
residue hold power in Carthage. Yet, in the name
of our mutual ties, I, your sister and your spouse,
ask that you spare that noble general’s life and
let him go safely amidst danger; not as a captive
in Roman chains. And let the walls of my city
stand, though half-ruined, though the power of
Carthage lapses, and so survive to honour me.’

BOOK XVII:370-405 JUPITER PROPHESIES THE FUTURE

Thus Juno spoke, and Jupiter answered her, briefly:
‘I grant the walls of Carthage the reprieve you ask:
let them stand, a testament to your tears and prayers.
But know the limits, wife, of my indulgence. No
length of days remains to Carthage, another Scipio
will come to raze utterly the city you have saved.
Moreover, your request concerning Hannibal is
granted: let him be snatched from the battle and
continue to breathe the air of heaven. He will still
seek to trouble the world and fill the land and sea
with war. I know his heart, that only nurtures war.
But my gift is conditional: he must never see Italy
again, never return to that land. Snatch him now
from imminent death, lest if he enters this fierce
battle on the wide plains, you should fail to rescue
him from the sword of this young Roman general.’
While the all-powerful god thus settled Carthage’s
fate, and that of Hannibal, the armies began to fight,
their clamour rising to the sky. Never had earth seen
mightier nations in conflict nor greater generals in

command of their country's forces. The reward for
victory was momentous, all lands beneath the sky.
The Carthaginian leader showed in gleaming purple,
the nodding plumes of his crimson crest adding to
his stature. Dread terror of a mighty name preceded
him, and that sword the Romans knew shone bright.
Opposite him was Scipio, dressed in radiant scarlet,
displaying his fearsome shield on which the images
of his father and uncle, breathing fierce war, were
engraved, while his tall helmet glittered with fire.
Despite the vast forces and their host of weapons,
all hope of victory depended on the generals alone.
Indeed, such was each soldier's trust in his leader,
and fear of his opponent, that if Scipio had been
born in Libya, they believed, the empire to come
must be Punic; while if Hannibal had been born
in Italy, doubtless Rome must now rule the world.

BOOK XVII:406-431 THE BATTLE OF ZAMA (202 BC)

The air was shaken by a storm of quivering spears,
a dreadful cloud spreading through the sky; then
came the sword at close quarters, face to face, eyes
filled with a fearful light. Those scorning danger,
rushing to meet the first shower of missiles, were
killed, as earth, reluctantly, drank her children's
blood. Masinissa, fiery by nature, hot with youth,
hurled his huge bulk at the Macedonian cavalry
line, circling the field with his flying squadron,
as the warrior in Thule drives his chariot, sharp
with scythes, round the packed ranks in battle.
The Macedonian phalanx closed together, in
the manner of their country, none could force
a path through their dense thicket of pikes.
Philip of Macedon, forgetting his promises,
breaking the treaty, had sent them to the help
of the shaken city; but now, weary, wounded,
their ranks grew thin, leaving space between

the spears as their bodies fell. The Romans ran in, bringing destruction, and scattering the faithless horde. Rutilus slew Archemorus, Norbanus killed Teucer (Mantua the home of both youthful victors) while Calenus' fighting arm slew Samius, and Selius downed Clytius, a native of Pella, filled with vain pride of his city's fame, though Pella's name could not protect poor Clytius from the Roman's sword.

BOOK XVII:432-478 HANNIBAL FIGHTS TO SAVE CARTHAGE

Laelius, fiercer even than these, wrought havoc among the Bruttian ranks, taunting them thus: 'Was Italy, then, so hateful that you were forced to flee, over rough seas on wild waves, in those Carthaginian ships? To flee was crime enough! Now would you drench a foreign soil with our Roman blood? So saying he hurled his spear at a hesitant Silarus, while the swift weapon lodged in the throat, robbing him of life and speech together. Vergilius now slew Caudinus, as fierce Amanus killed Laus. The Romans' rage was increased by the familiar appearance of their antagonists, the style of their weapons, and their shared speech. When Hannibal saw the Bruttians showing their backs in flight, he shouted: 'Stand, and never betray our nation!' while his arrival and courage swayed the battle, just as a snake in Egypt, on the parched plains of the Garamantes, hunting among the burning sands, rears its head, and shoots its venomous cloud of poison into the air. Herius, who, back home among the Marrucinians in famed Chieti, bore a noble name, aiming to launch his spear, was forestalled by Hannibal's preventing him. Herius eager to meet so famous an antagonist, made a mighty effort, but Hannibal drove his

sword to the hilt in the Roman's body. Dying, the man looked for help from Pleminius, his brother. He, maddened at his brother's fate, thrust his sword threateningly at Hannibal's face, demanding his brother be returned to him. Hannibal replied: 'Yes, if you return my brother to me. Let that be our bargain, now, summon Hasdrubal from the shades! Shall I forget my hatred of Rome, let my heart be softened, spare a single man that Italy bore? Then may my brother keep my unbrotherly spirit far from his eternal dwelling-place, and his dear company, by Lake Avernus!' So saying, he brought his weighty shield down on Pleminius and toppled him, his feet sliding on ground wet with Herius' blood; then Hannibal employed his sword. As Pleminius fell, he stretched out his arms to embrace his brother's body, the agonies of death being eased in their dying together. Then Hannibal plunged far into the depths of the fray, and roaming widely he forced his enemies to flee; as when thunder and lightning trouble the heavens and the high palace of the gods, and every man on earth is terrified, and a fierce light flares in their faces, such that they believe, in their fear, that the living Jove stands there before them, hurling his lightning only at them.

BOOK XVII:479-521 SCIPIO SEEKS HANNIBAL IN THE FIELD

Elsewhere on the battlefield, as if the solitary danger that mattered was where Scipio waged fierce war, the furious conflict displayed new and diverse forms of death. One man lies flat, pierced by the sword, another groans pitifully his bones shattered by a stone; some, fear sent

sprawling on their faces, lie there in shame; yet
others, brave men, bear their wounds in front.
The Roman general drives on over the piles
of dead, as Mars by the chill Hebrus, stands
tall in his chariot, urging it on, delighting
in slaughter, melting the Thracian snows
with rivers of hot blood, while the chariot,
groaning beneath the weight of the god,
shatters the ice north-winds had formed.
And now Scipio, raging furiously, seeks
out all the expert and the brave and puts
them to the sword; all those renowned
the world over for their deeds in battle,
tumble to their deaths among the spears.
Those who ravaged Saguntum, starting
that vile war by shattering the walls of
the doomed city; all those who polluted
Trasimene's sacred waters with blood,
and the pools of Phaethon's River Po;
and those so bold as to march fiercely
against the seat and throne of Jupiter,
seeking to burn it; all those were slain
in hand-to-hand encounters, sharing
the same fate as those who boasted
of desecrating the gods' secret places
by piercing the Alps' untrodden ways.
Now the Carthaginians, filled with fear
of their crimes, turned wildly and fled,
bereft of their senses, as people rush
into the streets struck by sudden terror,
when fire grips urban buildings, a gale
fanning swift flame scattering it across
the rooftops, consternation everywhere,
as though an enemy has taken the city.
But Scipio, impatient of delay, weary of
chasing lesser men over the battle-field,
chose to turn his effort against the source
and origin of all Rome's ills. For even if
Carthage were set ablaze, and her forces

diminished, Rome had gained little as
long as Hannibal lived; while, if he alone
fell, all her men at arms would benefit
Carthage not one iota. So Scipio gazed
over the field, searching for Hannibal,
longing to bring on the final conflict,
one he wished all Italy might witness.
Rising to his full height, he taunted
the enemy with his shouts of defiance,
demanding of them a fresh antagonist.

BOOK XVII:522-566 JUNO SEEKS TO PROTECT HANNIBAL

Hearing his cry, Juno dreaded lest it reach
the ears of the fearless Carthaginian leader,
and swiftly creating a phantom Scipio, set
a gleaming plume on its helm, then gave it
a shield like Scipio's and draped a scarlet
cape round its shoulders, giving it Scipio's
way of walking, and his attitude in battle,
and made the bodiless image stride boldly.
Next she invoked a phantom warhorse, as
insubstantial as its rider, to gallop swiftly
by devious paths towards a specious duel.
Now the Scipio Juno had created appeared
to Hannibal's sight, boldly brandishing its
weapons. The Carthaginian was full of joy
on seeing the Roman leader before him,
and hoping to gain the mighty prize, threw
his agile limbs across his horse's back and
hurled his spear furiously at his opponent.
The phantom rider turned and fled, swiftly
crossing the plain, far beyond the fighting,
while Hannibal confident of victory and
sure of fulfilling his ambition, spurred his
mount till the blood spurted, and shook
the loosed reins at its neck harshly: 'Scipio,
where are you going,' he shouted, ' while

forgetfully yielding us our realm? There is
no hiding place for you on this Libyan soil.'
So saying, he chased the speeding phantom
with naked sword, to a region distant from
the noise of battle, where it suddenly faded
into the clouds. Hannibal fumed: 'What god
concealed his divinity to oppose me? Why
hide behind a phantom? Are the gods jealous
of my fame? But whichever god it is that so
favours Rome, he will never conceal my foe
from me, nor rob me by cunning of my true
enemy.' Then, he turned his mount, in anger,
and was riding swiftly back towards the fray,
when by Juno's arts his warhorse stumbled,
stricken by some fever, breathing out its life
through straining lungs. Beyond endurance,
he cried: 'Another game of yours, you gods,
but I am not deceived. Better to drown at sea,
the reefs my tombstone; oh, to be swallowed
by the ocean waves! Is this the destiny I was
preserved for? Those I led to battle, following
my standard, are slaughtered, and I am absent;
I hear the groans, the cries to Hannibal for help.
What Tartarean stream can purge me of guilt?'
And even as he poured out his complaint, he
gazed at his sword, longing fervently for death.

BOOK XVII:567-596 JUNO MISLEADS HANNIBAL IN THE GUISE OF A SHEPHERD

Then Juno, pitying the man, adopted the likeness
of a shepherd, suddenly emerging from a shadowy
grove, speaking to him, as he pined for inglorious
death; 'Why are you here, armed, in our peaceful
woods? Do you seek the battle, where your leader
is destroying the remainder of the Romans? If you
would reach it by a quicker path, I will guide you
to the heart of the fray, by a track nearby.' Assenting,
he promised the shepherd a rich reward, saying that

the rulers of lofty Carthage would deliver him fine
recompense, nor would his gift be less. But Juno led
him in circles, as he tore by leaps and bounds across
the neighbouring plain; obscuring the path, earning
no thanks for secretly saving his life against his will.
Meanwhile the Carthaginian troops, abandoned
and fearful, saw nothing of Hannibal nor of his
skills in battle. Some thought he had fallen to
the sword, some that he despaired of the outcome,
bowing to the will of the gods. On came Scipio
driving them in flight over all the plain. Now
even the citadel of Carthage trembled: all Africa
was filled with terror and confusion, at their rout,
as, fleeing not fighting, panic-stricken men raced
at high speed for distant shores, scattering in their
flight as far as Spain; some seeking Cyrene, city
of Battus, others the Nile; just as when Vesuvius,
erupting due to hidden forces, spews out ancient
lava, molten rock accumulated through centuries,
and Vulcan's outpourings spread over sea and land,
until, marvellous to tell, even the Seres, in the East,
find cocoon-bearing leaves white with Italian ash.

BOOK XVII:597-624 HANNIBAL VOWS TO FIGHT ON IN DEFEAT

Wearied at last, Hannibal was forced by Juno to take
a seat on a nearby hill, from which he could see every
dreadful detail of the battlefield, as once he had viewed
the field of Cannae by Mount Garganus, Trebia's marsh,
Etruscan Lake Trasimene, and Phaethon's River Po,
dense with corpses. Now, unhappily, he witnessed his
army's overthrow, while Juno returned angrily to her
home in the skies. As the enemy approached the hill,
Hannibal communed with himself: 'Though the sky
tumble about my head, Jove, and earth crack open,
you will never erase the events at Cannae, yet your
reign shall end before the world forgets Hannibal's
name and deeds. Nor, Rome, do I leave you free of

dread; I will survive my country's fate, and live on
in hopes of warring against you. You may have won
this battle, but your enemies remain: it is more than
enough for me that the mothers of Rome, the land
of Italy, tremble that I live; and lack peace of mind.'
Then Hannibal joined a crowd of fugitives, and swiftly
sought a safe hiding place in the nearby mountains.
So ended the war. The citizens of Carthage opened her
gates to Scipio of their own free will. He relieved them
of their weapons, assumed the power they had misused,
inscribing new laws, reducing their vast wealth, while
all her turreted war-elephants were surrendered. Then
Carthage witnessed a dreadful sight, her fleet being set
ablaze, the waves aglow with the sudden conflagration,
while Nereus, lord of the ocean, trembled at the glare.

BOOK XVII:625-654 SCIPIO'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO ROME

Scipio had won enduring glory, the first man to bear
the title of a land he had conquered: Africanus. Sure
of Rome's authority he returned to his native city in
triumph. Before him, in procession, went Syphax,
carried on a litter, eyes downcast, a captive with
golden chains about his neck. Hanno, as well, with
noble warriors of Carthage, Macedonian chieftains,
swarthy Moors and Numidians, Garamantes whom
Ammon sees when he scans the desert, and the men
of the Syrtes, that danger to ships. A representation
of Carthage too was visible, stretching her arms, in
defeat, to the sky; and other images, Spain at peace,
Cadiz at the western margin, Calpe, boundary once
of Hercules' labours, and the Baetis in whose sweet
waters the sun's horses bathe. There too was Pyrene,
mother of savage war, thrusting her wooded heights
towards the heavens; the Ebro too, no gentle river
as it pours all its attendant waters into the waves.
But nothing drew the crowd's eyes and minds more,
than an image of Hannibal, in retreat over the plain,

as Scipio himself, tall in his chariot, fine in purple
and gold, showed his martial countenance to the host
of citizens. So Bacchus seemed when he drove his
chariot, drawn by tigers, wreathed with vine-leaves,
down from the hills of perfumed India; so Hercules
after killing the mighty Giants, when he traversed
the wide plains of Phlegra, head touching the stars.
All hail, invincible father of your country, yielding
not a jot of glory to Quirinus, yielding not a thing
to Camillus in merit! Nor indeed is Rome misled
in speaking of your divine ancestry, scion of Jove
the God of Thunder, lord of the Tarpeian Heights.

End of Book XVII, and of the Punica